

**REFORM OF THE PERMIT PROCESSING SYSTEM
OF THE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT:**

**THE RESULTS OF AN APPLICANT SURVEY
& RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

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**PREPARED BY:
SUPERVISOR FRED KEELEY**


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INTRODUCTION

Brief History of Permit Processing Reform:

In 1978, the voters of Santa Cruz County adopted a comprehensive growth management and environmental protection ordinance, known as Measure J. That vote has been upheld in election after election where voters have continued to indicate their support for the basic concepts of growth management and environmental protection.

In order to implement growth management, the Board of Supervisors has adopted additional ordinances, regulations, and procedures which constitute the County's land use and development structure. These ordinances, together with the development, adoption, and implementation of the Local Coastal Plan, have brought about a very complex land use regulatory system.

For many years, the Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Department were significantly more focused on the regulatory function than on the impacts of such a system on permit applicants. After the major policy development efforts had been completed, it became clear that attention would have to be focused on the tangled webs which had developed in the permit processing system. The Board of Supervisors provided leadership on this issue several times.

On March 7, 1989, the Board of Supervisors took several actions which set forth the basic framework for additional reform of the County's permit processing system. These are the elements of the Board's actions:

1. PUBLIC OUTREACH. The Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director was directed to develop a public outreach program "designed to identify problem areas where additional permit processing reform is needed." Included as specific direction were:

a. A Permit Applicant Survey. "A questionnaire shall be designed by the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director to be mailed to all permit applicants during the last year."

b. Focus Groups. "Focus groups shall be convened by the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director for the purpose of determining what improvements to the permit processing system may be needed from the point of view of specific constituencies."

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS. The ACAO/Planning Director was directed to provide the Board with an immediate list of "actions for additional operational improvements."

3. BUDGET ACTIONS. The ACAO/Planning Director was directed to return to the Board during budget hearings in 1989 with budget recommendations for implementing permit processing reform in the Planning Department, including funding for the following items:

a. Automated Land Use System.

b. Automated Permit Processing System.

c. Critical Path and Systems Analysis of Permit Processing.

d. Training of Department Staff.

4. MONTHLY REPORTS. The ACAO/Planning Director was directed to "provide a monthly report to the Board of Supervisors concerning the progress being made to achieve permit

processing reform. Such reports shall contain both subjective and objective measurements of permit processing reform (including public feedback and statistical measurements).

These actions, followed by commitments of General Fund support to implement these items, have resulted in measurable improvements to the County's permit processing system. However, during budget hearings in 1989, funds were not allocated by the Board to conduct the applicant survey.

Confidential Applicant Survey:

In order to be able to measure the effectiveness of the permit processing reforms on the consuming public, a Confidential Applicant Survey (CAS) was designed, mailed, data compiled, analyzed, and presented in this report. The sample population were those applicants for building permits, use permits, and/or earthquake permits in the 5th Supervisorial District of Santa Cruz County.

The CAS is the first comprehensive effort to measure "customer satisfaction" concerning the permit processing system of the County Planning Department.

The CAS demonstrates that some of the permit processing reforms instituted to date have had a measurable positive impact on the experience of constituents who apply for permits. The CAS also reveals that for many people, the reforms are not comprehensive enough to have been of benefit to them.

Most importantly, the CAS reveals that the County has set the correct course toward the goal of achieving meaningful permit processing reform. Also, the CAS indicates that constant attention must be paid to both full implementation of the March 7, 1989 reforms, and adding other actions which will assure that the permit processing system is, from the point of view of the applicant, fair, even-handed, and efficient. In short, a permit processing system which enjoys as much support in the public as do the policies of growth management and environmental protection which are the foundation of the permit processing system.

Report Format:

The Confidential Applicant Survey Report is presented as follows:

1. **Introduction.** This introduction provides a very brief overview of permit processing reform, and explains the basis for the Confidential Applicant Survey.
2. **Methodology.** This section provides the reader with methodology which was used in developing, processing, analyzing, and presenting the survey and survey findings.
3. **Results & Discussion.** The results and discussion are presented in two ways. First, the results are presented in a straight forward manner as they appear in the survey itself. Second, a contingency analysis (commonly know as "cross tabulations") is presented to provide comparisons of important issues and trends.
4. **Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations.** This section presents the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer, Planning Department and other interested County departments, and the general public with:

- a. The most significant findings of the survey;
- b. A discussion of how those findings relate to the on-going permit processing reform effort; and,

c. A list of recommendations for actions by the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer, the Planning Department and other appropriate County departments, which will result in full reform of the permit processing system of the Planning Department.

5. Applicant's Bill of Rights. This is a consolidation of many of the major trends and issues which emerge from the survey.

6. Attachments. The attachments include relevant documents concerning the survey and permit processing reform: A) Survey Results; B) Survey Comments; C) March 1989 Board Item; D) Zucker Report Discussion; and, E) May 1991 Monthly Report.

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Confidential Applicant Survey was developed by Supervisor Fred Keeley, Supervisor Keeley's staff, and Dr. Jeffrey A. Schwartz, who is president of Law Enforcement Training & Research Associates, Inc. Dr. Schwartz is a recognized leader in the field of crisis intervention training and research. He has more than a quarter century of experience in developing, implementing and analyzing written survey instruments and their results.

The CAS was mailed to all property owners in the 5th Supervisorial District for which the Planning Department had a record of an application having been filed during 1990 for an earthquake repair/reconstruction permit, building permit, or use permit. The CAS was sent to 1,060 earthquake repair applicants, and 467 non-earthquake permit applicants, for a total of 1,527 surveys. CAS's were mailed on May 1, 1991. The results of this report are based on 142 CAS's which were returned to Supervisor Keeley's office by May 29, 1991. The response rate was 9.62%. (An additional 10 surveys were returned after the deadline, and were not included in the final data.) The results were geographically distributed throughout the 5th Supervisorial District, and appear to be similar in all other respects to the total population of applicants in the 5th Supervisorial District on an annual basis.

The 5th Supervisorial District list of 1,527 total applicants in 1990 for permits from the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, do not appear to be different in any significant way from the applicants for permits in the remainder of the unincorporated area of the County. Therefore, generalized conclusions can be projected onto the larger group of applicants from throughout the County based upon the results of this survey.

CAS results were scored using a numerical coding system. The scores were then entered into a computer-based spread sheet program, tabulated, and a contingency analysis prepared on several key factors. The numerical results are presented as Attachment "A".

Comments which appeared in answer to "open ended" survey questions, as well as comments which were written in the margins of the survey were compiled and are presented as Attachment "B". (Staff names which appeared in any of the comments have been edited out to ensure confidentiality.)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Introduction: The Confidential Applicant Survey consists of sixty (60) questions, some with multiple sections and response possibilities, and is attached for reference as Attachment "A". In this section of the report, the survey questions will be referenced by number in parenthesis.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

The Confidential Applicant Survey (CAS) contained an introductory section which asked for demographic information regarding the respondent's name, address, assessors parcel number, and permit application number. This information was optional and was included as a mechanism for providing written responses from the Supervisor to those who selected to disclose this information.

(1) **Who actually processed your permit?** Nearly two-thirds (62.7%) of the responses were from applicants who processed their own permit, and another 5.5% of the responses were from persons who had a family member process their application. A much smaller group used a contractor (15.1%) or a consultant (2.7%). Insofar as the primary goal of permit processing reform has been to provide assistance to individuals in the application process, the significant response from individuals is encouraging.

(2) **What type of permit?** Just over half of the responses (52%) were received from persons who had applied for an earthquake repair permit, and 28.7% were from those who had applied for a building permit. Use permits accounted for only 2%, and 10.2% were from those who had made "multiple applications."

(3) **Nature of project?** 70.4% of the total responses were from applicants who were undertaking remodels (30.2%), additions (12.2%), or repairs (28%). This is contrasted with 21.5% of the responses from applicants seeking a permit for new home construction, and 3.5% for new commercial construction purposes. These numbers are fairly consistent with the perceived mix of applications on a regular basis from the 5th Supervisorial District.

(4) **Cost of project?** Nearly a majority (48.6%) of the applications were for projects ranging in cost between \$10,000 and \$100,000. Projects less than \$10,000 constituted 27% of the responses, and 22.9% of the responses were from applicants whose projects cost more than \$100,000. This mix is also consistent with the perceived mix of applications for permits on a regular basis from the 5th Supervisorial District.

(5) **Area where project is located?** The responses to the CAS were geographically distributed throughout the 5th Supervisorial District:

Boulder Creek	28.9%
Other (Scotts Valley, Summit Los Gatos, etc.)	22.7%
Ben Lomond	19.3%
Felton	17.2%
Zayante/Lompico	11.0%
Brookdale	.69%

This broad distribution of the responses provides a district-wide base of information concerning permit processing.

(6) **"Red tag" or not?** The vast majority of the responses (85.5%) were from those who did not make their application as a result of a "red tag" or other enforcement action by the County. It should be noted here that a cross tabulation of survey results indicates that a number of the earthquake permit applicants who responded may have interpreted this question as relating to the "red tags" which were placed on some earthquake damaged structures by building inspectors immediately following the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. The "red tag" reference in the CAS was intended to mean "Stop Work Order." Therefore, the data received for this question was not used elsewhere in this report.

(7) **Applied for other permits?** Most (59.7%) of the respondents have not made a previous permit application. Although a significant number (40.2%), however, have had at least a single previous experience with the permit system. (8) **How many previous applications?** Of those who have had a previous experience, the majority (52.5%) had only a single previous application. (9) **When was your most recent experience?** More than half (50.8%) were prior to 1989. The balance, 47.3%, applied in 1989 or later, which is the period of time in which the most recent permit processing reform effort was discussed, authorized by the Board of Supervisors, and undertaken by the Planning Department.

INITIAL APPLICATION:

(10) **When did you apply?** With the exception of January (23.3%), the applications were relatively evenly distributed throughout the year. This is consistent with the operations of the Planning Department following the earthquake.

(11) **When was final action taken?** Regarding processing time, 30.4% of the applicants received their permit in one month or less, while 64% received their permit in less than three months. More than a third (36%) of the respondents indicated that it took more than three months for their permit to be issued. This relatively rapid time for permit issuance may be influenced to some degree by the large number of earthquake permits which constitute more than half of the applications represented in this report. The earthquake permits were, often times, issued on the same day as the application, and many were issued within two or three weeks.

(12) **Final disposition of application?** More than three quarters (78.1%) of the respondents were issued a permit, while less than a fifth (18.3%) had their application pending disposition at the time they completed and returned the CAS. Only 3.5% of the respondents had their applications denied. This provides a substantial base of information from a large number of applicants concerning their experience with the entire system from application through final inspection.

(13) **Form of initial contact?** A majority (58.5%) of the respondents had their first contact with the Planning Department at the Planning Department Counter (or at the Earthquake Unit office). More than a quarter (26.6%) had their first contact by telephone, while only 1.4% had their first contact with the Department by mail.

(14) **Information regarding process?** A very high percentage (83.9%) of the respondents believed that they were provided with information during their initial contact concerning the process for evaluating and deciding upon their permit. (15) **Was information complete?** (16) **Was information accurate?** However, of that group, only 53% believed that such information was complete, and 60.1% perceived that information

as being accurate (16). (17) **Enough information to submit "complete application"?** Of those who received information, only 52.2% were provided with enough information to submit a complete application. This issue of information accuracy and sufficient information to submit a complete application is analyzed and discussed later in the contingency analysis of this report.

(18) **Additional information to process application?** With regard to those persons who did not receive enough information during their initial contact to submit a complete application, a variety of reports and other information surfaced later during the process as being required by the Department in order to consider the application complete and prepared for processing, including: fees (n=15), geologic reports (n=23), geotechnical reports (n=22), engineering reports (n=23), and other information (n=15).

(20) **Contacts with department?** Regarding the number of telephone, personal, and written contacts applicants had with the Planning Department during the course of their permit being processed, 64.1% report seven or fewer telephone contacts. More than a third (35.9%) had between 8 and 99 telephone contacts. In contrast, 51.6% of the respondents report three or less contacts in person with Planning Department staff. Of the 58 respondents who had written contact with the Department, 53.2% report between one and six correspondences.

(21) **How long did it take to make appointments?** Nearly two thirds (65.9%) of the respondents indicated that less than one day was required for them to make an appointment with a Planning Department staff member. A relatively small percentage (8.5%) reported that it took them six to nine days to make an appointment. (22) **Was staff on time?** More than three quarters (80.3%) of the respondents indicated that the Planning Department staff were always or sometimes on time for scheduled appointments. Less than ten percent (9.1%) indicated that staff was always late.

(23) **How long to receive return telephone call?** While the Planning Department's established goal for returning telephone calls is 24 hours, CAS respondents report that this goal is being achieved 69.2% of the time. Moreover, twenty respondents indicated that their telephone calls were seldom or never returned.

DURING THE PROCESS:

(24) **Did you get a "road map"?** Just over half (56%) of the respondents perceived that they were advised how long it would take to process their application and issue a permit.

(25) **Were specific steps explained?** Specific steps regarding the permit process were explained to 61.4% of the respondents, while 38.5% did not perceive that such detail was provided to them.

(26) **Were time estimates provided?** Only 42.3% indicated that they were provided with time estimates for each step in the process.

(27) **Did you experience substantial delays?** A majority of the respondents (55.8%) reported that they experienced substantial delays on the part of the Planning Department in processing the permit application. (28) **Were the delays explained?** Of those who reported such delays, more than half (45 of 89) reported that the delay was explained after it occurred, and approximately a third (29 of 89) of the reported delays were not explained to the applicant. Very few respondents reported that they received advance notice of delays in processing their permit.

(29) **How many delays?** While a majority (51.4%) of those who reported delays in permit processing indicated that they experienced between one and five delays, fully 48.4% reported that they experienced between five and more than ten delays.

(30) **Average length of each delay?** Among that group of respondents who reported delays, 10.4% reported that the delay(s) they experienced extended the processing time by less than one week. Nearly half (49.1%) reported that the delays they experienced took between one and two weeks, and 39.9% reported that the delay(s) added more than three weeks to their processing time.

(31) **Special hardship?** Sixty-seven respondents listed a delay which created a special hardship.

(32) **Were you given a "single point of contact"?** When asked if they had a "single point of contact" within the Planning Department responsible for their permit application, 39.3% reported such a contact. (33) **Satisfied with responses?** Of those who had a "single point of contact", 59.3% reported satisfaction with the response to their inquiries, needs for status reports, and updates concerning their permit application. (34) **Did lack of "single point of contact" cause you a problem?** Of those who did not have a "single point of contact", 60.9% found this to be a problem. The correlation between receiving a "single point of contact" and other performance and satisfaction issues is discussed at several places later in this report, including in the contingency analysis portion of this section.

(35) **Nature of problem?** Fifty respondents listed one or more problems as the result of the lack of a single point of contact.

(36) **Was information consistent?** When asked to evaluate the consistency of information provided to the applicant by Planning Department staff members, a wide range of responses were received:

Very Consistent:	26.4%
Somewhat Consistent:	24.0%
Somewhat Inconsistent:	20.0%
Contradictory:	29.6%

(37) **Coordination among County departments?** Similarly, when asked to evaluate the quality of coordination among and between County departments during the processing of their permit, a wide range of responses were received:

Excellent:	15%
Good:	23.5%
Fair:	16.9%
Poor	20.7%
Very Poor:	23.5%

(38) **Did staff make clear decisions?** A majority (54.9%) of respondents reported that the Planning Department made clear decisions during the process. (39) **Did staff make timely decisions?** Less than a majority (45.5%) thought that staff made timely decisions about their permit application. (40) **Was decision making criteria clear, specific, complete, and timely?** During the process, a majority of respondents believed that the criteria used by staff to make decisions about the permit application was clear (50.4%), specific (56.8%), and timely (51.8%). However, with regard to completeness of the criteria used by staff to make decisions, a majority (57.6%) felt that the criteria was not complete.

(41) **Was an appeal process offered?** When a respondent disagreed with a decision made by Planning Department staff, nearly three quarters (72.4%) indicated that they were not advised that an appeals process was available. (42) **Did you use the appeal process?** Of those who were advised of an appeals process, virtually no one (7.1%) used it. (43) **Was the appeal process fair?** However, of the very few who did use an appeals process, 62.5% perceived the process as being fair even if they did not prevail upon appeal. (44) **Why didn't you use appeal process?** Of those who did not use the appeals process, 31 respondents listed reasons why they did not.

(45a) **Rate staff courtesy.** When asked to evaluate their overall experience with the Planning Department staff, 77.0% of the respondents rated the staff as very or somewhat courteous, while 7.6% rated the staff as rude. (45b) **Rate staff knowledge.** When asked to evaluate the level of staff knowledge, 30.2% of the respondents found the staff to be very knowledgeable, 34.8% thought the staff was somewhat knowledgeable, and 34.8% perceived the staff as not being fully informed. (45c) **Rate staff responsiveness.** When asked about the responsiveness of staff to their needs, respondents indicated in a majority of instances (63.5%) that the staff was very or somewhat responsive. Nearly a fifth of the respondents (17.8%) felt that the staff was somewhat unresponsive, and 18.6% indicated that staff was very unresponsive.

(46) **Rate process.** Respondents were asked to evaluate the permit process, (as contrasted with an evaluation of the Planning Department staff), regarding whether or not the system is fair, understandable, and efficient, the results were as follows:

- A. **Fairness:** Very Fair (23.6%) Fair (33.5%)
 Somewhat Unfair (22.1%) Unfair (20.6%)
- B. **Understandable:**
 Very Understandable (18.4%) Understandable (31.5%)
 Somewhat Unclear (25.3%) Unclear (24.6%)
- C. **Efficiency:** Very Efficient (18.9%) Somewhat Efficient (27.2%)
 Somewhat Inefficient (23.4%) Very Inefficient (30.3%)

The data seem to indicate that respondents found the system to be somewhat less understandable than they did fair, and even less efficient than understandable or fair.

(47) **Rate this application experience compared to your previous experience.** Among that group of respondents who had previous experience with the planning process, 35% indicated that their 1990 experience was better or much better than before. An equal number (35%) perceived their experience as the same, while 28% indicated that their experience was somewhat or much worse than before. Certainly, these results can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but it appears to indicate that while progress is being made, much more needs to be done to fully reform the permit processing system.

(48) **Specific recommendations.** Eighty-six respondents listed specific recommendations to make the permit process more efficient, fair, and even-handed. (49) **Additional comments.** Seventy respondents listed additional comments regarding the permit process.

BUILDING INSPECTION

(50) **Who dealt with building inspectors?** When asked who was involved in calling for and dealing with building inspections, 45.9% of respondents indicated that they handled it themselves, while 27.8% relied on contractors. This is roughly equivalent to the perception in the Building Inspection section regarding the mix of those who call for inspections on a regular basis.

(51) **Was inspection process explained?** Less than half (46.2%) of respondents say that the building inspection process was explained to them when they received their permit but prior to construction. (52) **Was information complete?** Of those who did receive an explanation of the building inspection process, 90.3% of the respondents found the information to be complete, and (53) **Was information accurate?** 90.1% of the respondents thought the information was accurate.

(54) **Were you given an acceptable date and time for inspection?** With regard to the scheduling of building inspections, 86% of respondents thought they were given an acceptable time and date for the inspection. (55) **Was inspector prompt?** When a building inspection was scheduled, 25.8% of respondents reported the inspector to be very prompt, and 55.2% said the inspector was prompt. Only 18.7% of respondents said inspectors were generally or always late. While improvement can be made here, this seems to be a positive indicator.

(56) **Was an appeal process offered when there was a disagreement?** When a respondent had a disagreement with the building inspector, only 17.6% said an appeal process was offered or explained to them. (57) **Did you use appeal process?** However, not one of the respondent chose to use the appeal process.

(59) **List general impression of building inspection process.** Ninety-two respondents listed comments about the building inspection process. (60) **Specific improvements for building inspection?** Thirty-four respondents went on to make specific suggestions for improvements in the building inspection and permit process.

CONTINGENCY ANALYSIS:

Introduction: The previous section presented a summary of the CAS results. This section is intended to provide a contingency analysis of several factors which appear in the CAS. The purpose of this section is to examine several factors from the CAS to reveal patterns of responses which can assist in the continuing overall effort to reform the permit processing system of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department. This section presents "cross tabulations" concerning several key concepts: **A) The effects of early and complete information; B) The effects of being provided with a permit processing "road map"; C) The effects of time estimates; D) The effects of a "single point of contact"; and, E) The effects of consistent information.**

A. THE EFFECTS OF EARLY AND COMPLETE INFORMATION:

(14) Was information provided during initial contact regarding evaluation and decisions concerning permit? (83.9% YES, 16% NO) vs. (46a) Perceived fairness of overall permit process. (Very Fair: 23.6%, Fair: 33.5%, Somewhat Unfair: 22.1%, Unfair: 20.6%)

	<u>Info</u>	<u>No Info</u>
Fair	64.15%	20%
Unfair	35.85%	80%
Totals:	100%	100%

This analysis indicates that those applicants who perceived that they had been provided information concerning the process for evaluating and deciding upon the permit, were strongly of the opinion that the overall permit processing system was fair. In even larger percentages, those who thought that they had not received information regarding the evaluation and decision making, generally found the permit processing system to be relatively unfair.

(15) Of those who felt that they had been provided information at the outset regarding the decision making process, was the information complete? (53% YES, 46.9% NO) vs. (46a) Perceived fairness of overall permit process.

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Fair	89.47%	29.63%
Unfair	10.53%	70.37%
Totals:	100%	100%

Among the group who felt that they had received information, a dramatic difference of perception emerges concerning the overall fairness of the permit process, based on whether or not the information they received was complete. Among those who felt they had received complete information at the beginning, fully 89.47% rated the overall system, to one degree or another, as fair. Conversely, a mere 29.63% of those who felt that they had received information, but felt that it was incomplete, also found the system to be fair.

(17) If you felt that during your initial contact with the Planning Department, that information was provided to you regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit, were you provided with enough information to submit a "complete application." (52.2% YES, 47.7% NO) vs. (37) During permit processing, how did you find coordination among County Departments (Public Works, Environmental Health, Fire Marshal, etc.) and the Planning Dept. (Excellent: 15%, Good: 23.5%, Fair: 16.9%, Very Poor: 23.6%)

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Coordinated:	70%	17.02%
Not Coordinated:	30%	82.98%
Totals:	100%	100%

When performing a contingency analysis on the notion of sufficient information to submit a complete application against the notion of degrees of coordination between County departments, an interesting pattern emerges. Among that group of respondents who indicated that they had received enough information during their initial contact with the Planning Department to submit a complete application, 70% also thought that the coordination between County departments was excellent or good. Only 17.02% of those who felt that they had not received enough information to submit a complete application then also perceived the overall system as being well coordinated. In fact, 82.98% of those who thought that they had not received enough information to submit a complete application rated the departmental coordination as poor or very poor.

(17) If during your initial contact with the Planning Department you were provided with information regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit, were you provided with enough information to submit a "complete application"? vs. (39) During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the timeliness of the decision. (Excellent: 19.4%, Good: 26.2%, Fair: 18.6%, Poor: 35.5%)

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Timely:	85.42%	13.73%
Untimely:	14.58%	86.27%
Totals:	100%	100%

In this contingency analysis, the comparison was seeking to reveal any patterns in perception between those who felt that they had or had not received enough information to submit a complete application, and those two groups' perceptions of the timeliness of decision making concerning their application. The results are as follows: The perceptions of timeliness of decision making between these two groups are almost identical opposites based on whether or not the applicant perceived that the information provided at the outset of the permit process was sufficient to allow for the submittal of a complete application. As a whole, 45.6% of the respondents felt that the decisions regarding their application were made in a timely manner, while 85.42% of those who felt that they had been given enough information to submit a complete application, had the same perception of timeliness of decisions by staff.

(17) If during the initial contact with the Planning Department, you were provided with information regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit, were you provided with enough information to submit a "complete application"? vs. (40a) (40c) During the process, was the criteria used by the staff to make decisions about your application: Clear (50.4% YES, 49.5% NO), Complete (42.3% YES, 57.6% NO)?

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Clear Criteria:	89.36%	18.37%
Unclear:	10.64%	81.63%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Complete Cri:	83.72%	8.51%
Incomplete Cri:	16.28%	91.49%
Totals:	100%	100%

Again, Question #17, concerning whether or not enough information was provided in order for the applicant to submit a "complete application", is compared to the responses to two specific aspects of Question 40 regarding clarity and completeness of the decisions made by staff concerning the respondent's application. The results of these two contingency analysis indicate a very strong correlation between the applicant's perception that they received enough information at the outset to submit a complete application, and their perception that the staff used clear and complete criteria in making decisions about the application. 89.36% of those who felt that the information allowed them to submit a complete application, rated the staff criteria for decision making as being clear and complete (83.72%). The other side of the statistical coin is that among that group who received information at the outset, but that it was not sufficient to allow for the submittal of a complete application, only 18.37% felt that the criteria used by staff was clear, and only 8.51% of that group felt that the criteria was complete. There appears to be a strong relationship between perceptions of sufficiency of information to submit a complete application and perceptions of clarity and completeness of criteria used by staff to make decisions about permit applications.

(17) If during your initial contact with the Planning Department, there was information provided to you regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit, was their enough information for your to submit a "complete application"? vs. (45a) (45b) (45c) Overall, what was your experience regarding the following issues concerning the Planning Department staff: Courtesy, Knowledge Regarding Policy & Procedure, and Responsiveness to Your Needs.

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Courteous:	94.64%	62.26%
Not Courteous:	5.36%	37.74%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Knowledgeable:	94.55%	34.62%
Unknowledge:	5.45%	65.38%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Responsive:	89.98%	43.4%
Not Responsive:	10.91%	56.6%
Totals:	100%	100%

Regarding staff fairness, this comparison indicates that nearly all (94.64%) of those who received information at the outset regarding evaluation and decision making and who had enough information to submit a complete application, also rated the staff as being very or somewhat courteous. Staff continues to receive more than a majority (62.26%) of favorable responses concerning courteousness from that group who had early information, but not enough the submit a complete application. Similarly, that group who had early and complete information, overwhelmingly (94.55%) found the staff to be knowledgeable about the process and policies of the department. Slightly more than a third (34.62%) of those who had early information, but not enough to submit a complete application, gave the staff positive marks on this measure. With regard to staff responsiveness to applicants needs, the group which received early and sufficient information in order to submit a complete application rated the staff as being very or somewhat responsive (89.09%) in a large majority of the cases; and, a majority (56.6%) rated the staff as somewhat or very unresponsive if the respondent received early information, but not enough to submit a complete application.

(17) If during your initial contact with the Planning Department you received information regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit, were you provided with enough information to submit a "complete application"? vs. (46a) (46b) (46c) Overall, what was your experience with the process itself: Fair, Understandable, Efficient.

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Fair:	94.55%	27.78%
Not Fair:	5.45%	72.22%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Understandable:	83.93%	18.87%
Not Understand:	16.07%	81.13%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Complete Info</u>	<u>Incomplete Info</u>
Efficient:	80.7%	11.32%
Inefficient:	19.3%	88.68%
Totals:	100%	100%

Again, it appears as if there is a strong correlation between the perception that an applicant received enough information to submit a complete application, and their perception that the overall system was fair, understandable, and efficient. By nearly equal but opposite percentages, those who perceived that they did not receive enough information to submit a complete application, rated the system as being generally unfair, unclear, and inefficient.

B. THE EFFECTS OF BEING PROVIDED WITH A PERMIT PROCESSING "ROAD MAP":

(24) With regard to your application, were you advised about how long it would take to process your application and issue a permit? (Were you given a "road map" from "A to Z"?) (56% YES, 43.9% NO) vs. (39) During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the timeliness of the decision. (Excellent: 19.4%, Good: 26.2%, Fair: 18.6%, Poor: 35.5%)

	<u>Road Map</u>	<u>No Road Map</u>
Timely Decision:	66.67%	17.31%
Not Timely:	33.33%	82.69%
Totals:	100%	100%

Among that group of respondents who believed that they were given a "road map" regarding their application, two out of every three (66.67%) gave positive responses concerning timeliness of decisions regarding their application. Conversely, 82.69% of those who perceived that they were not given a "road map" felt that the timeliness of decision making was fair or poor.

(24) With regard to your application, were you advised about how long it would take to process your application and issue a permit? (Were you given a "road map" from "A to Z"?) vs. (45c) Overall responsiveness of Planning Department staff to your needs, and (46a) overall fairness of the process.

	<u>Road Map</u>	<u>No Road Map</u>
Responsive:	78.87%	41.82%
Not Responsive:	21.13%	58.18%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Road Map</u>	<u>No Road Map</u>
Fair:	76.06%	31.58%
Not Fair:	23.94%	68.42%
Totals:	100%	100%

More than three quarters (78.8%) of those who responded that they had received a "road map", also indicated that the staff was very or somewhat responsive to the applicant's needs. While a large percentage (41.82%) of those who did not receive a "road map" also felt that staff was responsive to their needs, a majority (58.18%) felt that they were not responsive.

Regarding perceived fairness of the permit process itself, more than three quarters (76.06%) of those who received a "road map" rated the system as very fair or fair. More than two out of every three (68.42%) of those who did not receive the "road map" thought the system was, to one degree or another, unfair.

C. THE EFFECTS OF TIME ESTIMATES:

(26) Regarding the specific steps involved in permit processing, were time estimates provided for each step? (42.3% YES, 57.6% NO) vs. (39) During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the timeliness of the decisions: Excellent (19.4%), Good (26.2%), Fair (18.6%), Poor (35.5%).

	<u>Time Estimates</u>	<u>No Estimates</u>
Timely Decision:	60.87%	30.51%
Not Timely:	39.13%	69.49%
Totals:	100%	100%

Clearly, when time estimates were provided to the applicant regarding each step in the process, a significant percentage of those same applicants (60.87%) felt that decisions regarding their applicant were made in a timely fashion. By even larger percentages, those who were not provided with time estimates, rated the timeliness of decisions to be fair or poor (69.49%) a great deal of the time.

(26) Regarding the specific steps involved in permit processing, were time estimates provided for each step? vs. (45c) Overall responsiveness of Planning Department Staff to your needs, and (46a) Overall fairness of the permit process itself.

	<u>Time Estimates</u>	<u>No Estimates</u>
Responsive:	70.83%	58.46%
Not Responsive:	29.17%	41.54%
Totals:	100%	100%

	<u>Time Estimates</u>	<u>No Estimates</u>
Fair:	71.43%	46.97%
Not Fair:	28.57%	53.03%
Totals:	100%	100%

When time estimates were provided to the applicant, a large percentage (70.83%) responded that the staff was responsive to their needs. A majority (58.46%) of those who did not receive time estimates also rated the staff as responsive, however there is a 12.37% spread between the favorable responses of these two groups.

Regarding overall perceived fairness of the permit process, 71.43% of those who received time estimates rated the system as very fair or fair. Less than half (46.97%) of those who did not receive time estimates for each step in the process rated the system in a positive manner concerning fairness.

D. THE EFFECTS OF A 'SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT':

(32) During the process, did you have a "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who was responsible for your permit? (39.3% YES, 60.6% NO) vs. (39) During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the timeliness of the decision. (Excellent: 21.1%, Good: 26.2%, Fair: 11.8%, Poor: 33%)

	<u>Single Point</u>	<u>No Single Point</u>
Timely Decision:	51.22%	40.28%
Not Timely:	48.78%	59.72%
Totals:	100%	100%

Applicants who received a "single point of contact" at the outset of the permit process generally felt that decisions made about the application by Planning Department staff were timely. Less than a majority (40.28%) of those applicants who did not receive a "single point of contact" rated the staff favorably concerning timeliness of decision making.

(32) During the process, did you have a "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who was responsible for your permit? vs. (45c) Over all what was your experience regarding the Planning Department staff concerning their responsiveness to your needs?

	<u>Single Point</u>	<u>No Single Point</u>
Responsive:	77.08%	51.35%
Not Responsive:	22.92%	48.65%
Totals:	100%	100%

Although a majority of both those who had and had not received a "single point of contact" rated the Planning Department staff favorably regarding responsiveness to applicant needs, the group who had received a "single point of contact" were significantly more favorably impressed with the staff (77.08% vs. 51.35%). Regarding negative impressions of staff, that group which did not receive a "single point of contact" were more than twice as likely to rate the staff negatively regarding responsiveness to the application's needs.

(32) During the process, did you have a "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who was responsible for your permit? vs. (46c) Overall, what was your experience with the process itself regarding efficiency?

	<u>Single Point</u>	<u>No Single Point</u>
Efficient:	59.18%	33.78%
Not Efficient:	40.82%	66.22%
Totals:	100%	100%

As in previous contingency comparisons using Question #32 regarding a "single point of contact", those respondents who believed that they had received such a contact, also were, in the majority (59.18%), of the opinion that the overall system was efficient. By an even larger majority (66.22%), those who did not receive such a contact were convinced that the system was somewhat or very inefficient.

(36) Was the information you received from all Planning Department staff members: Very Consistent (26.4%), Somewhat Consistent (24%), Somewhat Inconsistent (20%), Contradictory (29.6%) vs. (46c) Overall, what was your experience with the process itself regarding efficiency?

	<u>Consistent Info.</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
Efficient:	90%	22.58%
Not Efficient:	10%	77.42%
Totals:	100%	100%

A strong relationship appears to exist between the notions of consistency of information and perceived overall efficiency of the system. Fully 90% of those who rated the staff as having provided very or somewhat consistent information also gave the system high marks for efficiency. Barely a fifth (22%) of those who felt that the information they received from staff members was either somewhat inconsistent or contradictory also rated the system as efficient.

(36) Was the information you received from all Planning Department staff members consistent? vs. (46b) Overall, what was your experience with the process itself regarding understandability?

	<u>Consistent Info.</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
Understandable:	80%	17.74%
Not Understand:	20%	82.26%
Totals:	100%	100%

By a 4:1 ratio, those who felt that the information provided by staff was consistent also felt that the overall system was understandable. Conversely, 82.26% of those who felt the information was somewhat inconsistent or contradictory also felt that the system was either somewhat unclear or unclear.

(36) Was the information you received from all Planning Department staff members consistent? vs. (32) During the process, did you have a "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who was responsible for your permit?

	<u>Consistent Info.</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
Single Point:	68.09%	31.91%
No Single Pt:	38.36%	61.64%
Totals:	100%	100%

More than two thirds (68.09%) of those who received a "single point of contact" concerning their permit also felt that the staff provided consistent information during the process. Only 31.91% of those who did not receive such a contact rated the information from staff as being very or somewhat consistent.

(36) Was the information you received from all Planning Department staff members consistent? vs. (33) If YES to #32 (Single point of contact), were you satisfied with their response to your inquiries, needs for status reports, updates, etc? (59.3% YES, 40.6% NO)

	<u>Consistent Info.</u>	<u>Inconsistent</u>
Satisfied:	84.38%	31.03%
Not Satisfied:	15.62%	68.97%
Totals:	100%	100%

Three quarters of those who perceived staff as providing consistent information also were satisfied with the responses they received to their inquiries for status reports, updates, etc. Alternatively, 80% of those who thought the information from staff was inconsistent or contradictory also were dissatisfied with the response they received regarding needs for status reports and other information.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction: As was stated in the Introduction section of this report, the Board of Supervisors has been providing policy leadership and funding concerning permit processing reform for some time now. The most significant effort, which began in 1989, is the subject of this Confidential Applicant Survey and report. In the Results & Discussion section of the report, a straight forward presentation of the results of the survey is presented, together with a contingency analysis (or "cross tabulation") of a number of the key areas evaluated by the CAS. In order to make positive use of the CAS and analysis, this section of the report is intended to provide the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrative Office, the Planning Department and other interested County departments, and the general public with: 1) The most significant findings of the CAS; 2) A discussion of how those findings relate to the on-going permit processing reform effort; and, 3) A list of recommendations for actions by the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrative Office, the Planning Department and other appropriate County departments, which will result in full reform of the permit processing system of the Planning Department.

FINDINGS

General:

1. The permit processing system is improving, and much more needs to be accomplished in order for the system to be truly fair, efficient, and even-handed.
2. A number of specific recommendations appear to be called for based on the results of the Confidential Applicant Survey.

Initial Contact & Application:

1. When an applicant is provided with complete information at the outset of the permit process, the applicant views both the staff and the system as being fair.
2. With enough information at the outset of the permit process to submit a "complete application", the applicant's view is that the:
 - a. County Departments are fairly well coordinated;
 - b. Decisions are made, generally, in a timely manner;
 - c. Staff is courteous, knowledgeable, and responsive;
 - d. The permit process system is fair, understandable, and efficient.
3. When an applicant is provided with information at the outset of the permit process regarding the basis and criteria for evaluations of and decisions concerning the application, the applicant views the system as fair.

4. When an applicant is provided with a "road map" concerning the process, including specific steps and estimates of time frames for each step, the applicant views the process as being fair, decisions being made in a timely manner, and the staff as being responsive.

5. The appeals process (both formal and informal) is neither well explained nor well known to the applicants.

During the Process:

1. When an applicant is provided with a "single point of contact" within the Planning Department who is responsible for the processing of the applicant's permit application, the applicant perceives that:

- a. The staff is responsive and is making timely decisions;
- b. The system is fair and efficient.
- c. The information among and between staff members is consistent.

2. The system is evenly viewed as being understandable and not understandable.

3. Delays during application processing are not generally brought to the attention of the applicant until after the delay has occurred.

Building Inspection:

1. Applicants generally view the Building Inspection staff as being prompt and providing complete and accurate information.

2. Applicants are not generally provided with a clear explanation of the building inspection process at the outset.

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY FINDINGS & THE RELATIONSHIP TO ON-GOING PERMIT PROCESSING REFORMS

Zucker Report:

The Board of Supervisors authorized the Planning Department to contract with Zucker Systems of San Diego to conduct a comprehensive review of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department development and permit processing system. Among other conclusions drawn by Zucker Systems was the "the Department is (in 1989) operating at a crisis level." Zucker Systems' report to the County went on to say, "Certain problems are more extreme than we've seen in any of our other similar studies. Our interviews indicated that the County's planning process has managed to alienate all sides of the development process. Much needs to be done." Zucker Systems then went on to make a very long list of very specific recommendations which were designed to improve the County Planning Department's permit processing system.

Each month, the Board of Supervisors receives a report from the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director. The report is divided into three parts, including a monthly update on each of the 102 Zucker System recommendations. This monthly report, a copy of the most recent report is attached to this report, lists the recommendations, the manager responsible within the Planning Department for implementing the recommendation, a recommended start and completion date for each recommendation, the current status, and a priority rating of each item. Marginal comments are provided each month by the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director concerning items on the list which need special attention either from the Planning Department or the Board of Supervisors.

The Zucker Systems Report (ZSR) recommendations are being implemented by the Planning Department, and are contributing factors to improvements in overall permit processing. However, as can be seen from Attachment "D", which is an analysis of the ZSR and the CAS, the CAS has highlighted several issues which will need to be addressed by the Board of Supervisors and go beyond the recommendations in the Zucker Systems Report.

Information Services Products Relating to Permit Processing Reform.

The Information Services Department of the County of Santa Cruz has been working with the Planning Department (and other County departments) to design and implement two very major computer-based systems which are likely to have a beneficial and significant impact on permit processing reform. One product, the Automated Land Use System (ALUS), is designed to automate the permit processing system so that applications can be tracked at each and every step along the way, thus assuring the ability of the applicant and the County to know the status of applications. Additionally, this product is designed to vastly improve the ability of County departments to concurrently process permits (as contrasted with sequential permit processing which requires one department to complete their work on an application before another can begin).

The second Information Services product is a geographic information system, known as the Electronic Mapping Information System (EMIS). The file will contain all information known to the County about a given parcel, thus allowing the applicant and the staff planner to know what kinds of constraints or other issues are likely to arise concerning a specific application for construction on a given parcel.

These two products, which are expected to be on-line within the next eighteen months, are expected to provide the resources to achieve two of the Board of Supervisors major goals: 1) Concurrent Permit Processing Among County Departments; and, 2) An "Early Warning System" for Applicants Concerning Issues Relating to Their Parcel and Development.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The applicant for a building permit in Santa Cruz County is typically a local resident who is either repairing or remodeling their own home or a rental unit, or planning to build their own home. Sometimes with the assistance of a local contractor, architect, planning consultant or other qualified professional, the applicant generally seeks to obtain the necessary County approvals and building permit so that the proposed work will meet with all local ordinances and regulations.

Even though the CAS provides evidence that the permit processing system is improving, many applicants continue to have a very difficult time working their way through the system in a timely manner. The Confidential Applicant Survey provides the Board of Supervisors with an additional tool for repairing this system. The Board has made a serious commitment of time, funds, and staff to the permit processing reform effort. However, until this survey was completed, the measures of needs for improvement and progress to date have been measured by looking inward at the institution itself. The CAS has provided the Board of Supervisors with a view of the system from the "customer's" eyes. It is now possible to see that many of the specific reforms which have been authorized and implemented are having a beneficial effect on the permit processing system. It is also possible to see that a number of additional actions are in order so that full reform of the permit processing system can become a reality. In short, the CAS confirms that the Board of Supervisors is on the right track, but it is critically important that the Board provide further leadership and direction on this issue.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The major permit processing reform effort begun by the Board of Supervisors in March 1989 is proving to be initially successful.

2. Full implementation of the Zucker Systems Report recommendations will contribute significantly to additional reforms of the permit processing system.

3. Implementation of the ALUS and EMIS computer-based systems will contribute significantly to permit processing reforms.

4. Neither the Zucker Systems Report nor the ALUS/EMIS systems fully address the following key findings of the Confidential Applicant Survey, and, therefore, additional actions are needed by the Board of Supervisors to establish these as part of the permit processing system:

a. A "Road Map" for the applicant which provides full and complete information about the permit processing system, including information required for a complete application, specific steps in the process, estimated time frames for each step, clear and specific criteria in making decisions, and, disclosure of appeals available to the applicant.

b. A procedure for alerting applicants at the earliest possible time of delays in permit processing.

c. A "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who is responsible for the applicant's application.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Therefore, I RECOMMEND that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Reaffirm through adoption of these recommendations and appropriate actions in relationship to the County's 1991-92 Fiscal Year Budget, that the Board of Supervisors is fully committed to accomplishing the goals of reforming the permit processing system of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, as indicated by the Board of Supervisors on March 7, 1989; and,

2. Adopt the attached Resolution establishing the "Applicant's Bill of Rights", and direct the County Administrative Officer and the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director to return to the Board of Supervisors with specific recommendations and actions which will implement the "Applicant's Bill of Rights" as part of the Planning Department permit processing procedures and policies; and,

3. Direct the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director to develop and implement a system of regular evaluation of applicant satisfaction concerning the permit processing system, and further direct the ACAO/Planning Director to make the results of such evaluations available on a quarterly basis to the Board of Supervisors together with any appropriate recommendations for actions to improve the permit processing system.

BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RESOLUTION NO.

On the motion of Supervisor
duly seconded by Supervisor
the following resolution is adopted

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING COUNTY
POLICIES FOR PERMIT PROCESSING

WHEREAS, the people of the County of Santa Cruz adopted by vote in 1978, a comprehensive growth management and environmental protection system; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors has implemented such a growth management system through a variety of ordinances, regulations, and policies; and

WHEREAS, the concepts of growth management and environmental protection continue to be critically important for and broadly supported by our community; and

WHEREAS, it is equally important that the permit processing system which, in part, implements growth management and environmental protection policies, be as broadly supported as the policies themselves; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors has undertaken an aggressive program of reforming the permit processing system of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department; and

WHEREAS, the permit processing reform effort has resulted in measurable improvements in the system; and

WHEREAS, more progress needs to be made concerning permit processing reform, and the Board of Supervisors is taking actions to achieve such progress; and

WHEREAS, an essential element of a meaningful permit processing reform effort is for the County to provide clear and helpful information to applicants for permits; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the people of the County of Santa Cruz to now set forth policies for the processing of permit applications by the County of Santa Cruz in a manner which will have the effect of upholding all of the policies of growth management and environmental protection, while, at the same time, establishing a reliable set of permit processing environmental guidelines.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz that the following policies are hereby

adopted for the processing of permit applications by the County of Santa Cruz:

1. An applicant is to be provided with complete information concerning the process which will be followed regarding the application, including specific steps in the process and estimated time frames for each step;

2. An applicant is to receive at the earliest possible time, all of the elements required by the County of Santa Cruz which would constitute a complete application;

3. An applicant is to be provided with clear and specific criteria which will be used by the County of Santa Cruz in making decisions pertaining to the application;

4. An applicant is to be provided with information concerning any and all appeals processes available concerning decisions made by the County of Santa Cruz which relate to the application;

5. An applicant is to be entitled to request and be provided with a "single point of contact" for processing the application;

6. An applicant is to be provided, at the earliest possible time, with notice regarding any delays in processing the application beyond the time frames established by the County of Santa Cruz for processing the permit.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this ____ day of _____, 1991, by the following vote:

AYES:	SUPERVISORS
NOES:	SUPERVISORS
ABSENT:	SUPERVISORS
ABSTAIN:	SUPERVISORS

Chair of the
Board of Supervisors

ATTEST: _____
Clerk of the Board

Approved as to form:



DWIGHT L. HERR, COUNTY COUNSEL

DISTRIBUTION: County Counsel
Planning Department

3412y

ATTACHMENT "A"

Survey Results

SUPERVISOR FRED KEELEY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

April 1991

Dear Friend,

Attached you will find a CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY regarding your personal experience attempting to obtain a permit from the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department or Earthquake Unit. I am very interested in your response to the survey.

In March of 1989, I introduced a major effort at the Board of Supervisors to reform the permit processing functions of the County Planning Department. I undertook this effort because I believed that the permit processing system at that time was seriously flawed, causing unnecessary delays, confusion, distrust, and outright hostility towards the planning function. For just over two years now, the Board of Supervisors has continued to provide funding and support for my efforts to achieve meaningful permit processing reform. While we have made measurable progress on a number issues, we have much more work to do in order for this system to be truly fair, efficient, even-handed, and beneficial to both the applicant and to the general public. Your responses to the questions in the attached survey will help me understand just how much further we need to go and how to get there.

In 1978, the voters of Santa Cruz County adopted Measure J which established a comprehensive growth management system in our community. Based on the principles of environmental protection, neighborhood preservation, resource conservation, and very cautious and managed growth, the voters told the Board of Supervisors to implement Measure J. Since that time, the voters have said time and time again that they continue to support growth management and environmental protection policies. At the same time, however, it is critically important for the procedures to be as good as the policies they are designed to implement. My efforts to accomplish meaningful permit processing reform, therefore, are designed to preserve the principles of growth management and environmental protection --- you can play a very important role in that effort by completing the attached survey and returning it to me by Friday, May 10, 1991.

Please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey, and help make permit processing reform a reality.

Sincerely,



FRED KEELEY, Supervisor
Fifth District

FJK:gr
Enclosure

NOT PAID FOR AT PUBLIC EXPENSE

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY

Introduction: This confidential survey is designed to find out what additional permit processing reforms must be undertaken so that the Santa Cruz County Planning Department permit processing functions will be efficient, fair, reasonable and understandable. Your responses will be used only in conjunction with all other responses in my continuing efforts to provide meaningful reform to the County's permit processing system. Your participation in this survey will help in that effort. Therefore, please complete and return this survey by Friday, May 10, 1991 to:

n=number of responses to each question

**Supervisor Fred Keeley
Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060**

Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

NAME (OPTIONAL): _____ ADDRESS (OPTIONAL): _____

ASSESSORS PARCEL NUMBER (OPTIONAL) _____

PERMIT APPLICATION NUMBER (OPTIONAL) _____

1. Who actually processed your permit? (Circle One)

n=145	62.7%	5.5%	2.7%	15.1%	5.5%	8.2%
	You	A Family Member	A Consultant	Contractor	Other	Multiple Responses

2. What type of permit did you apply for?

n=146	2%	28.7%	52%	4.1%	10.2%
	Use Permit	Building Permit	Earthquake Damage Repair Permit	Other (Specify)	Multiple Responses

3. What was the nature of your project?

n=139	21.5%	3.5%	30.2%	12.2%	28% - Repair
	New Home Construction	New Commercial Construction	Remodel	Addition	4.3%-Multiple Responses

4. What was the cost of your project?

n=144	27%	48.6%	22.9%
	Under \$10,000	More than \$10,000 but less than \$100,000	Over \$100,000

5. In what general area is your project located?

n=145	17.2%	11%	19.3%	.69%	28.9%	22.7
	Felton	Zayante/Lompico	Ben Lomond	Brookdale	Boulder Creek	*Other (Specify) (see Table 1)

6. Did you need to get a permit because you received a "red tag" or other "stop work" order?

n=145	14.4%	85.5%
	Yes	No

7. Have you applied for permits other than this 1990 application?

n=144	40.2%	59.7%
	Yes	No

8. If you answered YES to #7, how many other applications for permits have you filed?

n=59	52.5%	6.7	3.3		
	1	2	3	4	5
	16.9%		3.3		16.9%

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY
PAGE 2

9. If you answered YES to #7, what was your most recent experience with the Planning Department prior to 1990?

n=57	24.5%	26.3%	47.3
	Prior to 1980	1981-1988	1989

NOTE: ALL REMAINING QUESTIONS RELATE TO YOUR 1990 PERMIT APPLICATION.)

INITIAL APPLICATION:

n=124 10. When did you apply for your permit? *See Table 2

n=92 11. When was final action taken on your permit (issuance or denial)? *See Table 3

n=142 12. What was the final disposition of your permit?

78.1%	3.5%	18.3%	0%
Issuance	Denial	Pending at This Time	Withdrawal

n=134 13. In what form was your initial contact with the Planning Department regarding your permit?

26.6%	58.5%	1.4%	13.3%
Telephone	Planning Department Counter	Mail	Other

n=131 14. During your initial contact with the Planning Department, was information provided regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit?

83.9%	16%
YES	NO

n=115 15. If you answered YES to #14, was the information complete?

53%	46.9%
YES	NO

n=108 16. If you answered YES to #14, was the information accurate?

60.1%	39.8%
YES	NO

n=113 17. If you answered YES to #14, were you provided with enough information to submit a "complete application"?

52.2%	47.7%
YES	NO

n=98 18. If you answered NO to #17, what specific information which became necessary in order for the Planning Department to process and approve your application was not made known to you at the initial contact with the Planning Department?

n=15	n=23	n=22	n=23	n=15
Fees	Geologic Report	Geotechnical Report	Engineering Report	Other (Specify)

n=9 19. If you answered NO to #14, when did you receive information regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon your permit? *See Table 4

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY
PAGE 3

20. If you personally handled the processing of your permit (as opposed to a consultant or contractor), please estimate the number of contacts you had with the Planning Department during the course of obtaining a final decision on your permit application:

n=101 # of Contacts by Telephone *See Table 5

n=114 # of Contacts in Person *See Table 6

n=58 # of Contacts in Writing *See Table 7

n=94

21. Please estimate the time required in order for you to make an appointment with a Planning Department staff member: *See Table 8

n=87

22. If you had scheduled appointments with one or more Planning Department staff members, they were:

45.9%	34.4%	10.3%	9.1%
Always on Time	Sometimes on Time	Usually Late	Always Late

n=68

23. Please estimate the time required for you to receive a return telephone call from the Planning Department when you left a specific message for a specific individual regarding your permit: *See Table 9

DURING THE PROCESS:

n=132

24. With regard to your application, were you advised about how long it would take to process your application and issue a permit? (Where you given a "roadmap" from "A to Z"?)

56%	43.9%
YES	NO

n=127

25. Were specific steps explained to you?

61.4%	38.5%
YES	NO

n=117

26. Regarding the specific steps involved in permit processing, were time estimates provided for each step?

42.3%	57.6%
YES	NO

n=129

27. Did you experience substantial delays on the part of the Planning Department in processing your permit application?

55.8%	44.1%
YES	NO

n=89

28. If you answered YES to #27, were these delays:

n=9	n=45
Explained in Advance	Explained after the Delay
n=29	n=7
Not Explained to You	Other

n=68

29. If you answered YES to #27, how many delays on the part of the Planning Department did you experience:

51.4%	20.5%	27.9%
1-5	5-10	More than 10

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- n=67 30. If you experienced delays, what was the average length of each delay? *See Table 10
- n=67 31. If there was a single delay which caused you a special hardship, what was that delay and hardship? 46.2% listed at least one type of hardship, 8.9% listed at least one type of hardship, 44.7% listed at least one of each
- n=126 32. During the process, did you have a "single point of contact" in the Planning Department who was responsible for your permit? 39.3% 60.6%
YES NO
- n=64 33. If YES to #32, were you satisfied with their response to your inquiries, needs for status reports, updates, etc? 59.3% 40.6%
YES NO
- n=82 34. If NO to #32, did this lack of a "single point of contact" cause you a problem? 60.9% 39%
YES NO
- n=50 35. If YES to #34, what was the nature of the problem? 74% listed one problem, 26% listed more than one problem
- n=125 36. Was the information you received from all Planning Department staff members:
26.4% 24% 20% 29.6%
VERY CONSISTENT SOMEWHAT CONSISTENT SOMEWHAT INCONSISTENT CONTRADICTORY
- n=106 37. During permit processing, how did you find coordination among County Departments (Public Works, Environmental Health, Fire Marshal, etc.) and the Planning Department?
15% 23.5% 16.9% 20.7% 23.5%
EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR POOR VERY POOR
- n=118 38. During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the clarity of the decision:
21.1% 33.8% 11.8% 33%
EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR POOR
- n=118 39. During the process, when Planning Department staff made decisions about your application, was the timeliness of the decision:
19.4% 26.2% 18.6% 35.5%
EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR POOR
40. During the process, was the criteria used by the staff to make decisions about your application:
- n=115 A. CLEAR - YES NO 50.4%/49.5%
- n=109 B. SPECIFIC - YES NO 56.8%/43.1%
- n=104 C. COMPLETE - YES NO 42.3%/57.6%
- n=110 D. TIMELY - YES NO 51.8%/48.1%

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41. During the process, when staff made a decision about your application with which you disagreed, was an appeal process explained or offered to you?

n=69

27.5% 72.4%

YES NO

42. If you answered YES to #41, did you use the appeal process?

n=28

7.1% 92.8%

YES NO

43. If you answered YES to #41, did you find the appeal process fair (even if you did not prevail on appeal)?

n=8

62.5% 37.5%

YES NO

44. If you answered NO to #42, why not? 96.7% listed one reason,
3.2% listed more than one reason

n=31

45. Overall, what was your experience regarding the following issues concerning the Planning Department staff:

n=131

A. Courtesy of Planning Department Staff

43.5% 33.5% 15.2% 7.6%
 VERY COURTEOUS SOMEWHAT COURTEOUS SOMEWHAT DISCOURTEOUS RUDE

n=129 **B. Knowledge of Planning Department Staff Regarding Policy and Procedure**

30.2% 34.8% 34.8%
 VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE SOMEWHAT KNOWLEDGEABLE NOT FULLY INFORMED

n=129 **C. Responsiveness of Planning Department Staff to Your Needs**

26.3% 37.2% 17.8% 18.6%
 Very Responsive Somewhat Responsive Somewhat Unresponsive Very Unresponsive

46. Overall, what was your experience with the process itself:

n=131

A. Fairness

23.6% 33.5% 22.1% 20.6%
 VERY FAIR FAIR SOMEWHAT UNFAIR UNFAIR

n=130

B. Understandable

18.4% 31.5% 25.3% 24.6%
 VERY UNDERSTANDABLE UNDERSTANDABLE SOMEWHAT UNCLEAR UNCLEAR

n=132

C. Efficiency

18.9% 27.2% 23.4% 30.3%
 VERY EFFICIENT SOMEWHAT EFFICIENT SOMEWHAT INEFFICIENT VERY INEFFICIENT

47. If you had a previous experience with regard to applying for a permit from the Planning Department, do you think your 1990 experience was:

n=57

12.2% 22.8% 35% 10.5% 17.5%
 MUCH BETTER BETTER THE SAME SOMEWHAT WORSE MUCH WORSE

48. Please list any specific recommendations you would make to the permit process which would make it more efficient, fair, and even-handed: 67.4% listed one suggestion,
32.5% listed more than one suggestion

n=86

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49. Any additional comments you have regarding the permit process: 70 respondents
listed comments

BUILDING INSPECTION:

50. Regarding your project, who was involved in calling for and dealing with building inspections:

45.9%	4.9%	27.8%	1.6%	0	19.6%
YOU	A FAMILY MEMBER	YOUR CONTRACTOR	CONSULTANT	OTHER	Multiple Responses

51. When you received your permit, but prior to beginning construction, did the Planning Department clearly explain the inspection process to you?

46.2%	53.7%
YES	NO

52. If you answered YES to #51, the information was:

61.5%	28.8%	7.6%	1.9%
VERY COMPLETE	SOMEWHAT COMPLETE	SOMEWHAT INADEQUATE	INADEQUATE

53. If you answered YES to #51, the information was:

52.9%	37.2%	5.8%	3.9%
VERY ACCURATE	SOMEWHAT ACCURATE	SOMEWHAT INACCURATE	INACCURATE

54. When you called for inspections, were you given an acceptable time and date?

86%	7%	7%
YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

55. When you had a scheduled building inspection, the inspector was:

25.8%	55.2%	16.4%	2.3%
VERY PROMPT	PROMPT	GENERALLY LATE	ALWAYS LATE

56. If you had a disagreement with the Building Inspector, was an appeal process offered or explained to you?

17.6%	82.3%
YES	NO

57. If you answered YES to #56, did you avail yourself of the appeals process?

0	100%
YES	NO

58. If you answered YES to #56, did you find the process to be fair (regardless of whether or not you prevailed on appeal)?

80%	20%
YES	NO

59. What if your general impression of the building inspection process: 92 respondents
listed comments

60. Please list any specific improvements in the building inspection process which would make it more fair, efficient, and even-handed (feel free to attached ideas to this form): 29 respondents listed one suggestion, 5 respondents listed more than one suggestion

THANK YOU FOR HELPING REFORM THE PERMIT PROCESSING SYSTEM.

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY - Results Tables

Question 5, Table 1 - Project Location? ("other"):

Scotts Valley: n=12	Santa Cruz: n=4
Summit: n=9	Rolling Woods: n=3
Skyline: n=4	Los Gatos: n=2

Question 10, Table 2 - When did you apply for a permit?

January: 23.3%	July: 4%
February: 6.4%	August: 6.4%
March: 11.2%	September: 8.8%
April: 7.2%	October: 4%
May: 7.2%	November: 6.4%
June: 3.2%	December: 11.2%

Question 11, Table 3 - When was final action taken on permit?

Months from date of application:

0 - 1: 30.4%	7 - 8: 2.1%
1 - 2: 14.1%	8 - 9: 3.2%
2 - 3: 19.5%	9 - 10: 1%
3 - 4: 6.5%	10 - 11: 1%
4 - 5: 6.5%	11 - 12: 0
5 - 6: 5.4%	12 - 13: 3.2%
6 - 7: 5.4%	13 - 14: 1%

Question 19, Table 4 - When did you receive information regarding the process for evaluating and deciding upon permit?

Months after application:

1 - 2: n=2	6 - 7: n=0
2 - 3: n=1	7 - 8: n=1
3 - 4: n=1	8 - 9: n=0
4 - 5: n=1	9 - 10: n=1
5 - 6: n=1	

Question 20, Table 5, 6, & 7 - Contacts with Planning during course of application?

Table 5 - Contacts by telephone:

0: 5.9%	8 - 12: 9.9%
1: 14.8%	13 - 19: 7.9%
2: 14.8%	20 - 29: 8.9%
3: 4.9%	30 - 70: 7.9%
4 - 7: 23.7%	71 - 99: .99%

Table 6 - Contacts in person:

0: 1.7%	7: 1.7%
1: 17.5%	8: 5.2%
2: 21.9%	9: .87%
3: 10.5%	10 - 19: 11.4%
4: 7.8%	20 - 39: 3.5%
5: 9.6%	
6: 7.8%	

Table 7 - Contacts in writing:

0: 36%	7: 1.7%
1: 17.2%	8: 1.7%
2: 10.3%	9: 0
3: 5.1%	10 - 19: 5.1%
4: 1.7%	20 - 39: 1.7%
5: 10.3%	
6: 8.6%	

Question 21, Table 8 - Time to make an appointment?:

less than a day: 65.9%	6 - 9 days: 8.5%
1 day: 6.3%	10 - 19 days: 3.1%
2 days: 7.4%	20 - 39 days: 4.2%
3 days: 3.1%	40 - 99 days: 1%
4 days: 0	
5 days: 0	

Question 23, Table 9 - Time for a return call?:

less than a day: 19.1%	Non-numerical written responses:
1 day: 50.7%	seldom/rarely: n=15
2 days: 17.6%	never: n=5
3 days: 1.4%	promptly: n=3
4 days: 4.4%	other: n=2
5 days: 1.4%	
6 - 9 days: 2.9%	
10 - 19 days: 2.9%	

Question 30, Table 10 - Average length of each delay?:

less than 1 week: 10.4%	5 weeks: 4.4%
1 week: 25.3%	6 - 9 weeks: 14.9%
2 weeks: 23.8%	10 - 19 weeks: 2.9%
3 weeks: 13.4%	20 - 29 weeks: 1.4%
4 weeks: 2.9%	

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ATTACHMENT "B"

Survey Comments

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY WRITTEN COMMENTS:

The Confidential Applicant Survey (CAS) has several questions which ask for comments, suggestions, and specific information. The comments, which appear below, were collated from those survey questions and, in some cases, from comments written in the margins of the document. In addition to the "official" comments, 16 respondents chose to attach comments in the form of letters to their surveys.

Question 18. What specific information became necessary in order for the Planning Department to process and approve your application was not made known to you at the initial contact with the Planning Department? (Specify "Other")

- Didn't say I needed clearing from Environmental Health or Assessor's before making second application appointment (it was moved from earthquake to planning, denied and had to reapply at Planning.
- Topo map, stair specs and others.
- Zoning, public works, septic.
- I was not informed about help being given on the demolition costs.
- Offsets and square footage permitted.
- specifications for approval of installation.
- septic clearance, building dept review, role of earthquake review dept, etc.
- plot plan, fire line, extra structural drawings and design.
- Mostly I was unfamiliar with jargon and needed more clarification.
- minor details, ie headroom requirements in a garage attic
- needed contractor type of repair information
- energy conservation requirements
- additional fees, additional conditions.

Question 19. When did you receive info regarding the process for evaluating & deciding upon your permit:? (people who answered other than in clear terms of days/weeks etc)

- After it was too late. After water heater had been installed. Info was not given during inspection in mid-process.
- Upon subsequent questioning by telephone.
- When my application was first denied.
- My permit was approved then denied 2 days later; then the contractor appealed, then I appealed, then the permit was approved - this agony took 7 days.

-Never have received adequate information, even when I asked for it.

-Haven't really. They told me I might need a geo & soil report, but I was tired of waiting for them to decide, so I just did it.

-Summer of 1990 when _____ got involved.

-as I proceeded with the process

-3rd meeting w/ building dept.

Question 23. Please estimate the time required for you to receive a return telephone call from the Planning Department when you left a specific message for a specific individual regarding your permit? (these responses are from people who answered other than in terms of days/weeks)

-Usually never, after leaving repeated messages I would give up and go to the office.

-4 months from staff

-4 days if ever (County Geologist)

-Most of the time they never called back.

-Would not return calls to my wife. With threats my phone calls were returned in about 2 hours.

-calls were returned promptly

-average 4 days, sometimes never

-1 day or never

-within hours or never at all

-no notice of people on vacation

-never

-promptly

-phone calls rarely returned

-Staff never returns phone calls

-Never. Try it yourself. Leave a message at 425-2701 and see what response you receive.

-never returned a call by a planner

-sometimes the same day - sometimes never unless I left a message with a supervisor. VERY frustrating.

-they never returned calls,

-2 days or no return call at all

-24 hours or not at all

-rarely were calls returned

-some never returned

-sometimes not returned

-One day in most cases. Currently (5/5/91) waiting since March 13th for written answer from staff.

-One day first time/ second time got no return call.

Question 31. If there was a single delay which caused you a special hardship, what was the delay and what was the hardship?

-I'm still in a trailer on the property 18 MONTHS AFTER EARTHQUAKE - no hardship at all - please come over for dinner with your wife -- you'll LOVE IT!!!

-Because it took so long to get our permit, we spent the winter with a 90 foot long, 8 foot high mudslide waiting to happen 8 feet behind our house. Luckily it didn't rain often enough to cause more than minor slippage.

-Misinformation provided - failed to sell house.

-Original permit issued; later decided more information and engineering needed. Why not explained at beginning?

-Reorienting from earthquake related to Planning department; dealing with the issue of my 6 foot fence.

-Your geologist (Martha?) cost us thousands of dollars due to a concern she had which had already been covered on our drawings if she would have read them right!

-Took so long to get any answers, had to ask so many people. Environmental people said yes then no, after I lost \$2500 on geology report.

-Environmental Health and also my plans were lost and I had to replace them.

-Public works requirements making rebuilding more costly than anticipated.

-Planning rejected the application when submitted and I spent 3 hours convincing them that I could be accepted.

-Geological.

-Our plans were unclear - required follow-up by engineer.

-Not having the money for the permit and the fear of having the inspector come and not expect or find more things that would not be accepted to clear the permit.

-The rules on being in the floodway.

-Delay due to new requirement for soil survey (not required at start), caused 4 week slip looking for soils engineer, etc. Later slip due to waiting for report to be filed and extra expenses.

-Only one person could give approval on plans. When he was out sick, vacation, meetings, etc, no progress was made. Also, specific geological info was missing. NO notice of what was required was given beforehand. The requirements varied depending who you asked. The geologist had to submit extra paperwork at my expense.

-Not explaining the 50% max addition rule. My architect had to redraw his plans. Not explaining the 5" 0" offset rule which we qualified for and again my architect changed his drawings at my expense.

-Routing is extremely slow. It took personal intervention to get my applications from one department to another and back.

-Unnecessary engineering report plus a rewrite of the plans.

Single delay/special hardship (Continued)

- geological
- saw 5 different people in these 2 visits. Got conflicting info.
- It's all hardship because it represents costly time off from work and travel to the planning department.
- Criteria changed each month, rework required.
- Unable to start on May 5, 1991, and as a result lost original contractor which bid the job. Had to find a new contractor, resulting in a delay of 2 months.
- Requirement of extensive geological studies causing a loss of \$470 septic permit due to expired one year limit. \$11,000 in geologic studies and still waiting for permits.
- Our permit application was to restore house to its condition prior to a fire ("as before" restoration); the planning department required us to spend tens of thousands of \$ bringing the entire house (built in the 1940's) to 1991 building codes.
- After submitting 7 copies of plans & specs there was at least a 6 week delay.
- Additional reports required of geotechnical and structural engineers. Insistence for additional drawings which had already been submitted. Repetition.
- Contractor was scheduled to start when staff member stated plans had to go to engineering plan check.
- Foundation construction - would not allow a pier and grade beam foundation which was superior to a perimeter foundation.
- When drawings were completed and presented to planning department for the permit, a denial was the final decision contrary to early verbal feasible addition.
- I'm not sure what the delay was, the process took 2 -3 weeks longer than they said it would take. I didn't want to ruffle any feathers so I didn't question the delay.
- geotechnical
- financial feasibility due to the inability and the lack of desire by the planner to do his job.
- Geologic review - what a joke!
- Our home remained unsafe for over 1 1/2 years. The stress of dealing with these clowns was nearly unbearable.
- soils engineering & sending report out for second opinion.
- I am finding out specific steps as I go along. At each step I have to ask what happens next. The post quake geo report delay has to be months. The outside review took 6 weeks, more to get the results to me, two more to get the results responded to, 5 more to get the response answered. Now my certificate of compliance for my septic has expired and I am told I have to do that all over again. My daughter is having a baby in a few weeks and I need a place for her and the baby to live in. I obviously won't have that in time.

Single delay/special hardship (Continued)

-Septic clearance form submitted to building, not sufficient that E. H. had approved already. One dept. does not communicate with other. Also, you must make an appointment (or sit in the waiting area for half a day) in order to submit plan corrections.

-geologic report processing

-acceptance of geology report after previous acceptance of soils report took MANY weeks, cost me over \$2500 in excess rent & storage cost. Plus delayed construction start over 2 months!

-had to take time off work twice to correct a planning dept. error.

-the first time our variance was denied (or conditionally denied)

-engineer report/evaluation

-all delays are a hardship. I am paying my mortgage including SBA rebuild funds whether I have used them or not!! I have to live w/ friends because I can't afford apartment

-when things were required to be even slightly modified the process took weeks

-Loss of one day's pay due to staying & waiting for inspector - When he did not show up!

-not knowing when I would have to vacate my home, I finally vacated one month early

-getting an appointment. Talked to 6 or more people when seeking an answer on permits, no one would take responsibility

-was issued permit, then had to surrender it and submit a new one

-delay of 2 to 3 weeks until I called to check on the progress & found out it was delayed between planning and the fire marshal - once it went to the wrong fire department

-did not inform of the requirement for a geo-hazards assessment or temporary mobile home permit requirement. When we applied for grading permit caused us a 3 month delay - about \$5000 interest.

-family cold (fireplace), kids in house can't use deck

-different stories from different planners

-Requesting soils engineering. When the requirement was dropped for one, much time and money were lost.

-Geological, soils engineering, environmental health - mental anguish

-When they lost assessors documents

-Indecision regarding soil test

-I believe the problem is more a feeling of frustration at the constant delays in permit issuance.

-If we had this questionnaire closer to the time we obtained permit we could have answered more correctly. We had 2 college sons who were going to do the work - because of delays they were unable to work & had to leave for college.

Single delay/special hardship (Continued)

-the house built in 1976 was never finalized. I now have to have the county sign off the final before a remodel permit can be issued.

-Yes, a permit for conversion of old residential took an unnecessary step.

-Requirements continually changed.

-change from conventional stairway to spiral stairway.

-Rejection of my plans for one problem, we changed them, then another pre-existing problem was "found". Why didn't they tell us about all at once? Delays took 3 months. For example: "footing off by 1 inch", "deck rail needs engineering report". Bullshit delay tactics! Why???

-Not sure planning knows what is to be done.

-Engineering Report got separated and was lost. I came down and helped find it. I did not view this as a negative experience, no one got disturbed.

-It was for an inspection. I wasn't given an estimate on when in the day the inspector would show up and the workers didn't get him to sign the proper papers - a bit of confusion but I called and he has the inspection on file so I guess it's OK.

-Two times I was told my permit was ready, I took time off work, sat for 2 hours and found out it was not ready. Went another time to pick up my permit & they lost my plans. So it was very much a hardship.

-Loss of status during transition to earthquake center (plans were lost between fourth floor and Earthquake Center for approx. 3 weeks), and inaccurate information in computer system.

-Re-submission cost extra \$1,000 because Plan Check didn't identify all corrections first time. My consultant was baffled about what they wanted. I had to re-submit my plans 3 times because Plan Check kept finding more corrections instead of all at once.

-I was lucky I didn't loose my house in the earthquake because the County would not let me legally fix a poor foundation and bolt the house to it before the earthquake happened.

-Planner left - case abandoned.

Question 35. What was the nature of the problem?

-eventually provided enough information after many follow-up calls/visits.

-Had to (have to) chase down each issue personally.

-Frustration because we couldn't find out what was happening. Different people meant different demands, new papers to sign.

-Time too long.

Nature of the problem (Continued)

-No one read the plans correct. I had to come in with a red pencil and circle obvious things because they couldn't walk upstairs or down the hall or telephone the other department who had the other part of our plans.

-Information not consistent. Environmental Health said yes seeing both sides of my house had approved septic then later denied after I spent \$2500 on a geology report, \$300 for permit. They should have said yes. Too many days down at the planning department.

-Did not help, would not return phone calls and lack of knowledge.

-No guideline set down about geological requirements and structural engineering problems.

-Getting clarification on what corrections needed to be made to finalize a permit.

-One hand not knowing what the other is doing.

-You never knew who to talk to.

-The instructions are complex & often need interpretation.

-Continued frustration from being given conflicting or different requirements.

-First inspector was friendly and informative. Second one was a jerk. Second one would not approve the job as we had completed it. He was very arrogant about it and did not take into consideration that we had been informed of certain specifications. These specifications were unreasonable.

-If I had a contact person, confusion would have been avoidable.

-Plan checker was in the main anonymous. County Fire Marshall was evasive. Person receiving plans was non-compus.

-Earthquake group was clueless in discussing other departments, procedures, etc. We had our plans rejected at least once by each department. It got to be a big JOKE except we were homeless for over one year and staying with relatives.

-Never knowing what was happening or who to talk to to solve problems.

-Diametrically opposing instructions were given.

-"Opinions" varied with counter person.

-Never knew who could give right answers

-I was told not to even call for 6 weeks.

-Many, many problems. For example, the first building inspector required a new pier and post foundation (cost \$3,000); the second inspector changed the requirement to a perimeter foundation (cost \$3000) after we had already installed the new pier & post.

-_____ became the staffmember we always contacted as he appeared to be the only person who really went out of his way to help us.

-Each time returning w/ drawings it was rejected for another reason not previously stated.

Nature of the problem (Continued)

- Zoning.
- The plan checker (structural) knowledge of what I wanted to remodel.
- Changing personnel in departments seems to mean different requirements. One env. health person told me how my septic should be fixed, 2 months later he was gone and the new person said it had to be totally different.
- Answers aren't obtained as quickly - & the "buck can be passed."
- not one individual to focus with, constantly had to explain from the beginning again and again
- not knowing status - a feeling they didn't know what they are doing. We were not told much, and it seemed chaotic.
- I never know whom to call. My papers apparently still say I am denied in energy calculation part even though that was corrected 4 months ago. I never know who is currently working on my plans.
- maintaining steady flow of all information required.
- attitude of some personnel.
- spoke to a different contact each week & had to explain situation over and over. Each 10 day review period to 2 to 4 weeks and no reasons were given and no single person was "responsible" to keep our permit moving. Plan check was done by several different people and lacked continuity.
- the problem seemed to be the system (either computer or filing or procedural)
- frustration
- keeping track of the paperwork and the system so things would make the proper destination. I always doublechecked and most of the time it was worth it.
- the specific rules or list of rules were not in writing, so every appointment added new problems without specific information for permit
- conflicting information. The "right" person (helpful & knowledgeable) would make processing easy. But there are too many "wrong" persons (not helpful or knowledgeable)
- delays for weeks to months. Conflicting information.
- didn't know which department to call to find out why it was delayed or lost in the wrong fire department
- did not know the requirements.
- no one plan checker could answer all questions I had on marked up drawings.
- increased time and confusion of the exact requirements necessary to complete the process.
- nobody in Santa Cruz County building department explains anything.
- Planner did not know his job, was rude as well as incompetent
- Misinformation. Planner couldn't decide what level.

Question 44. Why didn't you use the appeal process?

-Staff claimed they made all the decisions.

-There is a basic antagonistic attitude that exists -- them against us. The attitude is: "You oppose this --- we'll make your life miserable."

-No idea what appeal process is - we had to do things their way or no way.

-Too complicated.

-I never contested their decisions. I wanted my permit and remained cooperative.

-My application was denied due to lack of geological information. I paid for a report - hence I paid rather than appeal.

-Rewrote plans to give them what they wanted.

-Was unaware I could appeal.

-Did not get process explained. Just kept fighting my way through problems.

-I was told everything was required before I could get a permit.

-changed plans

-Will get the help of a lawyer and take the county to court if necessary soon.

-It would have cost me more in time to amend the plans than to overbuild as per approved plans.

-never informed of the option of an appeal

-the variance request was reviewed at a subsequent planning meeting - no formal appeal was necessary

-I never used the process

-If they could agree, I would have tried to do what they wanted

-Our position was "do what they ask so we can get our permit."

-Lack of coordination within county offices

-was not worth the effort to continue with planning staff attitude

-staff not helpful often

-contrary staff responses

-I prevailed at the counter - appeal unnecessary.

-afraid of more delays

-it wasn't explained

-department made a mistake, no appeal needed.

-Not necessary, I redesigned.

-didn't know it was available.

-I found it easier to just make the changes that the staff wanted, rather than appealing a decision.

Question 48. Please list any specific recommendations you would make to the permit process which would make it more efficient, fair and even-handed:

-With the mess you currently have -- wouldn't know where to start.

-Mostly it was the 4 to 6 weeks in between every step that got us and then the changes in staff in Earthquake division would mean more waiting and more demands.

-Have competent people, have same policy apply to all.

-Zoning and Planning should be aware of their policies and offer consistent help. I was told 3 times by phone my fence would be alright. I was given a paper saying no permit needed from planning. I spent over \$3,000 for a fence that later turned into an issue.

-Don't say maybe. Give an answer yes or no before geology and soils report want a better idea. Have Environmental Health go to site and keep to their word.

-Fire them all and start over with new people with job experience.

-Policies should be simply and clearly written so that the public and staff can understand them.

-Fire them.

-A "road map" to guide novices like myself would be great as a tool to help us figure out the system.

-I was sent 5 or 6 denial letters. We would make changes that were requested, then get another letter with different denial. I think all changes requested should have been in first letter. It should not take 5 or 6 letters for this. Time wise it took 3 or 4 weeks for each request.

-Tracking through departments, communication and application requirements need to be improved.

-Not to be afraid to ask questions for fear of being suspected of having an illegal business, structure, etc. Also, the government should be considerate of the people who want a permit, and not so stuck up about it. If you want to upgrade something, you can't for fear of being penalized.

-The staff treats us like the enemy. I only got the permit because your office helped me.

-Lady at the counter was great.

-The above comments apply to the Planning Department in 1989 & 1990. My experience with the earthquake unit was the opposite. They were prompt, efficient, helpful, skilled, and made their reviews promptly. The only delay was in final inspection where their inspector had to delay waiting for the Planning Department's inspector.

-Certain small remodeling (less than 100 square feet) should be walked through the office in 1 - 2 days, not 5 weeks.

-Computer data entry was slow and the lag caused misinformation. Use faster process like bar code to access account, then plans/documents can be transacted in fewer steps.

List any specific recommendations (Continued)

-Better internal coordination; have point of contact know who is reviewing permit in other department and its status to explain delays. (We shouldn't have to deal with everyone involved in review.)

-Have back-ups for people in critical bottleneck approval positions. TRAIN personnel better so they can answer or direct questions more efficiently and correctly.

-In-house review of geotechnical report. A how-to guide from each of the departments, what they want and how to do it.

-While overall my earthquake problem was handled well, a sense of service ethic and urgency could be instilled in the public employees. They don't seem to like their job and it shows.

-Get people in the department that know something (anything).

-Establish the building dept. as its own dept. Allow repair work to \$2,000 without a permit.

-Get competent staff, write understandable regs, make staff responsible for coherent actions and comprehensive decisions. Nobody will make a commitment because nobody is certain what they really want from you in the beginning, middle, or even at the end. The process is unreasonable, and the staff is courteous but unconscious.

-Hire intelligent people. Demand an I.Q. over 100. Pay good salaries. Have one person own your file and be accountable for a timely response. 48 hours seems doable.

-Have one person as contact to carry permit completely through process and not have to deal with just anyone.

-After the first review detail EVERYTHING that is needed in writing.

-Consistent guidelines clear enough so inspector doesn't have to over design to cover his/her ass from potential liability from the next quake.

-Move faster. (Be) Better informed. Have people who can make decisions rather than have reports go to 4 or more departments or consultants before issuing permits.

-Allow outside professionals to do more, without county interference. For example septic consultants - geo consultants - licensed engineers without having to go back to county process.

-Reduce the time to get permit; 7 copies of plans (they cost money)

-Planning department staff have an adversarial stance toward the homeowner.

-Provide training so that staff are consistent, even if it is something that makes the process more difficult.

-Fire half the staff of all county agencies and reorganize.

-Make procedures consistent from person to person.

List any specific recommendations (Continued)

-Have one contact person instead of being bounced around between several departments which seem to have no idea what the others are doing.

-This initially was just a 32 square foot remodel (addition) to improve the look of the house. If I knew beforehand what I was getting into I would have avoided the county and gone ahead as most of my neighbors have.

-I didn't like waiting for the planner for over two hours and getting a parking ticket. If people are going to be kept in planning so long why have such a short fuse on the parking time?

-Have clerks be knowledgeable and helpful - give them computer terminal & training on how to use them.

-we had heard many horror stories about the permit process, but our experience so far has been complete satisfaction.

-Fire everybody! Cotton & Associates should be fired. This firm is a self-interested group that is only benefiting itself. Fire staff.

-prepare a fact sheet of process steps, timeframes, criteria, what we need to provide etc

-they seem to want to make it as difficult and frustrating as possible - but they are nice about doing it. Assign one individual in the county to follow an application from beginning to end, giving the applicant someone to contact who actually knows what's happening.

-Have personnel knowledgeable about S.C. mountains - on sight inspections -knowledge of prior soil report, geotech reports, etc, etc.

-Provide a flow sheet of the entire process so applicants know what information is required and how it is processed.

-I can't respond fairly since the 1990 application was a very small project handled exclusively by the earthquake unit. Also, the work has not started yet, so I have not experience with inspection yet.

-Permits obtained through FEMA office were fast & efficient.

-Change their attitude. If they do not like your project, even if the zoning is correct, they should tell you how unreasonable they can be.

-single contact/responsibility and accountability for each application. Stick to required time limits or change them so applicants don't expect speedy decisions. Be consistent with requirements regarding geology reports for neighboring properties. Obtain compassion for homeowners.

-make an individual responsible for each permit so it doesn't get hung up on a desk or a technicality for days at a time.

-Why not adopt the same attitude towards the public most cities in Calif. have - not confrontational - just issue the permits, and the inspection process will demand the work is up to standard. Delays cost the public money, delays coupled with

List any specific recommendations (Continued)

incompetence and rudeness are unacceptable and some are rejecting the permit process as not working.

- streamline the process. The time & efficiency loss because constant switching from one case to another I'm sure is immense.

- hire a plan previewer - helps guide layperson (like Los Gatos does)

- none

- road map of process. Would have liked earthquake office to stay open longer.

- pleased with process

- make it clear to everybody they are affecting other peoples lives and life savings with the wonderful administrative maze

- deal with one person or one officer throughout the job would be nice

- a name specific review process at the end of each project would be helpful and you should act accordingly. Staff turnover results in, a) inexperienced staff at contact level & b) promotion of the wrong people.

- keep good help, fire bad help

- crosstraining? Get all the various departments communicating & knowing what the other one is doing.

- A full flowchart with decisions, costs, times and options - they would find it so complex they might simplify the process so that they can finish the flowchart

- get rid of the bozos

- The only good employees there are ____ & _____. Can the rest!

- Accept the licensed professionals as knowing current codes, correcting actual mistakes on plans, not requiring the rewriting of the current U.B.C. on each set of plans. Amend ordinances to be absolutes not open-ended, left to the discretion of the individual building technicians to interpret as he or she may.

- Get rid of the person in charge.

- my project was small so I didn't have much contact.

- I was left with the impression that staff thought I was going to try and put something over on them.

- Cut out the baloney.

- Why are there no questions on this form concerning \$? Get rid of telephone "messages". Put humans on the other end of line.

- Cut the red tape, return phone calls, staff doesn't even understand the system, too complicated. This is a minor point but it is typical of the overburdened process. Energy calculations must be included in the plans and a "wet" signature is required. That means that once the drawings are completed and printed, the owner must sign, then take the plans to the designer to sign then take the plans to the energy consultant to sign then take them to the county. If the planning/building staff does not accept the plans and revisions are required then the signature

List any specific recommendations (Continued)

run-around starts again. A copy of the signature (blueprint) should be adequate.

-Building a garage should not take more than 2 -3 weeks to get a permit. Ours took 10 weeks.

-Could have used some earthquake money help.

-On each occasion that my drawings have been found lacking I have gone in to consult the earthquake staff. Yet in spite of making all their corrections, each time they continue to find more things they want to see. It's become a joke that the engineers and draftsmen who help me became exasperated months ago. My energy engineer said it was illegal that they require what the code does not. Yet it's my house, so I'm stuck. On one occasion I can into the earthquake unit to find no one at the reception desk, one staff member eating sunflower seeds and talking to another in the hall, while a third stalked victims to shoot with rubber bands. I waited 15 minutes just to ask a simple question.

-Encourage not oppose improvement on old rundown property, have more energy efficient, and, increase tax base.

-Sorry I couldn't be more help but my contractor handled all the work. Hear-say was he had no problem. Thanks anyway.

-Each time I had an appointment it would take 1-2 hours to get in to see the staff member, this should be corrected.

-Call for appointment to inspect property with me - explain other possibilities!

-I would like for the codes to be explained more clearly and changes the inspector finds necessary more clearly explained in writing. I was given a vague change the inspector felt necessary and if he would have written it down I could have given this instruction to workers more clearly.

-Better guide to processes, more stability in guidelines (ie) changes in requirement seem to be made at the rate of twice a week!

-I was told no appointment was necessary. When I came in, I was told to wait, and given no idea how long the wait would be. It turned out to be 1/2 hour. They could at least keep a toy box for the children!

-This demolition permit was very straightforward because it was for removal of a burned down house. The real test will come soon because we will be submitting applications this month (May) for building a new home on the site.

-All things considered we had quite efficient treatment.

-A list to conform to each standard at the beginning of the process.

-Was denied when our geologist proved your geologist wrong at a major expense to us! I had an appointment, what a joke. There were 2 people ahead of me once and I still waited for 2 1/2

List any specific recommendations (Continued)

hours to be seen. They lost papers in different departments. Decisions were made in a timely way if they liked you, not if you were a trouble-maker. _____ was very courteous, everyone else somewhat discourteous.

Question 49. Any additional comments you have regarding the permit process:

-receptionists were always very courteous, and 1 very rude assistant.

-_____ very courteous, others somewhat.

-staff was courteous but not helpful.

-_____ very knowledgeable, others somewhat.

-the timeliness was fair; as much as could be expected from a bureaucracy.

-It was vague & seemed arbitrary - it cost me another \$750 for additional engineering after 9 months wait for first approval

-Lack of a single point of contact cost more money & time, it has taken one year to get a permit for a garage

-_____ did a great job-our problems were with others.

-I had no single point of contact, however, I did meet with the engineer only when _____ came with me & I had to ask for clarification

-new conditions added with each attempted submittal

-Was advised how long it would take, but it wasn't accurate.

-they couldn't design a roadmap if they wanted to

-The earthquake rebuild process is demeaning, degrading, heavy-handed and above all non-empathetic to the daily plight of the people!

-A draftsperson processed our permit until she got fed up, then I took over. They kept asking for different things, we would comply in 2 - 3 days then would have to wait 4 - 6 weeks to hear from them again, then repeat!! Also, they lost us in the computer, we got sent to the wrong department, old staff members left then new ones needed more time. Our plans kept either getting lost or rejected due to minor things.

-A major complaint. Someone at the Planning Department told us if we didn't put heat into our new converted carport (new sun room), we wouldn't have to pay taxes on it. So now we have an additional area which we enjoy but is very cold, but we do have to pay taxes on it. If we would have known, we could have very easily brought our forced air vent into it. We also understand that the planning department was very over-loaded because of earthquake stuff. They weren't sympathetic to us people who just wanted to start living normal life without county crap to hold up everything. Almost 2 years since the quake, our family is now back to normal. The whole process was just a bit overwhelming and very unorganized. Also because of the mental and physical

List any additional comments (Continued)

anguish of going through a major quake on top of it. We are very glad that hopefully we'll NEVER have to deal with "you people" again!

-Soils & geology reports are way too high priced to only get a maybe even from the county geologist. I'm not rich and lost the gamble. I should have been informed of yes or no. Environmental health should keep their word.

-Most permits could be handled by mail saving time and money for everyone concerned.

-I really appreciate the opportunity for input and hope this will help to improve the building process. (The process) is lengthy, financially burdening, stressful.

-I am glad I am not a building contractor trying to make a living with Planning Department policies.

-staff tried hard, but were short-handed (for the work to be done) and the process seems to be changing. Fred, thanks for helping to improve the system.

-Process is a burden and unreasonable for typical citizen.

-Information was inaccurate because the Board of Supervisors had not yet determined how this type of permit was to be handled.

-It seems to me the cost of the permit is too much with no option to make it less. Too much like a monopoly, we have no choice in the matter.

-I do not believe my experience was representative. With procedures and details stripped from the process because of the earthquake emergency the process was a breeze.

-My limited experience was pleasant and efficient. Have had no experience with the regular Planning Department.

-Maybe more people available at Planning Department office, so that when some were in the field, there was adequate coverage remaining.

-The woman who answered the phone knew next to nothing. Most important, perhaps, is that in answer to my questions about chimney repairs no one bothered to tell me the Planning Department had published an excellent brochure on the subject. Why didn't they offer to send it to me?

-Our permits became a full time job for my wife. If an owner/builder tries to get this done and works a fulltime job, most likely he will give up. A study in the art of frustration. Comments heard at Planning Department concerning the number of divorces and families split the process has caused.

-Don't understand the need for health inspector/septic OK when building less than 100 square feet with no plumbing.

-Overall I found the people helpful and polite and efficient.

-It seemed like there was good balance in the staffing, with few exceptions things were about as economically run with proper expertise and training. OK. They (staff) put up with a lot of abuse from others while we were there.

List any additional comments (Continued)

-I think despite the unusual load due to the earthquake, you should be proud of the basic organization and helpfulness.

-When I stopped by the Planning Department to pick up a use permit renewal application, I was told by the receptionist that I would have to wait until someone could come out and talk with me. I told her I only wanted an application and that my mother was waiting in the car. I waited 45 minutes. She said "you have 2 hours in the parking lot." She went on break and someone else came out. I asked for and received an application immediately.

-I'm more interested in streamlining the zoning code enforcement.

-Why not a geotech in planning? No one wants to make a decision on his own.

-Personnel in department are totally under qualified for their job!

-It's insulting, unpredictable and the people are inefficient and sometimes not equal to the task.

-As a victim of nature I felt very frustrated but luckily I had earthquake insurance. As a victim of your system I was caused great emotional distress and I missed a lot of work time and lost a lot of sleep. I felt the process was like winning the lottery. I couldn't believe it when it took 5 months to expedite my permit as a victim. What a laugh. Totally a joke at taxpayers expense.

-Would hate to go through process again!

-This experience was better than previous, because someone else did it (designer).

-Remember, this was a simple chimney repair. Hardly anything could be simpler, and expeditious handling was to be expected. How much did the special earthquake permit processing unit cost? It should have come out of existing assets but I know it didn't.

-Contractor will not work in county again.

-As each process was completed, we were asked to change plans, get another report, etc.

-Some staff members seem jaded and not too friendly.

-Dealing with the county was an absolute nightmare - extremely stressful. They have total power over whether you can move into your house - and they let you know it!

-_____ & _____ were a great help.

-Dealing with Environmental health was very difficult.

-If you deal with a good staff member, you have no problems - if you don't you are in for a rough time.

-Thanks for any help you can offer for myself or others to follow.

-The supervisors are usually reasonable - the new inspectors leave a lot to be desired - inflexible, hard-headed and power hungry.

List any additional comments (Continued)

-There has been a change of attitude which makes a process that is inherently burdensome at least bearable. Much better than years past.

-the difficulty in obtaining home improvements encourage many people to do it without permit and that is too bad.

-Let person trying to obtain permit hire zoning official to spend day on site (enviro - noise - site - geo) make determination of usability same week.

-I was very grateful for the help of _____.

-Why is so much detail required? Earthquake permits were issued (at first) with minimal information - was the public safety compromised with the simplified process - if not why is the typical process so involved?

-No problem.

-If I had known how painful this would be before I started, I would not have begun. I am now in too deep to get out.

-We cannot be the only people to use the process who found helpful, knowledgeable interested staff to work with both in 1979/80 and 1990/91.

-leave it with regular County employees.

-I had only 1 step - I was informed on first visit what documents were needed. My permit was approved on second visit. I was fortunate to have a single point of contact. Extremely satisfied with staff response to inquiries- businesslike, knowledgeable & efficient.

-The "road map" changes with every visit. No one is willing to tell you the steps. Time estimates wrong by a factor of 2 or 3. Players changed daily. Little or no information available. Can't solve problems if you're not having one.

-Does not deal with reality. Best to avoid and do your work without permit.

-It works for those who plan ahead.

-why is it that 3 homes on our road were required to obtain geology studies, but I was the only 1 to comply, but all 3 homes have been issued permits? I feel this process is very unfair. Our geology study cost us \$25,000.

-simplify the procedure. Our first building permit took 3 hours to obtain in 1972. Our last one took 5 months. Isn't there a happy medium?

-It takes entirely too long and is far too detailed.

-have more speed for earthquake victims-extreme financial burden

-If you continue to perpetuate the political ambush at least warn people of the time frame expected

-they're not complete with their information

-I feel fee upon fee is heaped on the permit process due to "easy target" with unfair results. (Pre-site grading inspection, etc) Room addition on flat lot requiring pre-site grading

List any additional comments (Continued)

inspection at \$400 when no grading permit is necessary is ludicrous!

-it is very difficult for an owner-builder to know the various requirements of the different departments so they can be prepared before the process is started. I felt lost and sensed that the various departments didn't talk to each other so I spent a lot of my time talking directly to the various departments to solve problems.

-the septic requirements are excessive & arbitrary. Fire regulations are worse.

-some permits have gone well, some have gone badly. The application I have referred to in this survey has gone very badly.

-Everything went fine. Previous horror stories I heard were not true in my case.

-I should have been able to walk this one through.

-Received the permit in 20 days! I found the whole process very efficient.

-The cost is prohibitive

-It's a joke.

-I was disappointed.

-Fees and Planner have increased over 100% since 1980 and number of number permits have dropped 100%.

-Probably with fines and everything, the cost will come to around \$1,000 for the permit. Your system must have used twice that in wages.

Question 59. What is your general impression of the building inspection process:

-inspector didn't show.

-Arbitrary and contradictory.

-Very poor.

-Inefficient, ambiguous, costly to the county, inconsistent.

-Needs a person in charge with knowledge.

-Fair, equitable, and to the point. A great contrast to the planning process. We could use more inspectors and less planners.

-Somewhat unsure of their authority, guidelines, etc.

-Excellent. Had no serious disagreements. Inspectors sometimes consulted code book and made fair compromise decision.

-Too cumbersome

-A lot better and more helpful than before.

-They seem to need to exert their influence by making you do something even if it doesn't make sense. It went smoothly if you just comply.

General impression of the building inspection process (Continued)

-Arbitrary and somewhat haphazard. The inspector I had acted as though he was doing me a big favor just to show up. His attitude was: "You will do things my way or else!" The permit people were just great.

-Inspector was fair and helpful to contractor.

-Satisfactory - he noted a few problems but returned & OK'd them when he said he would.

-Weird! Inspector showed up several days before work was scheduled to begin asking to see my permit. On the day he was supposed to show up, he was 1 1/2 hours late - the contractor had left. He first gave approval, then knocked on the door 5 minutes later to say he'd changed his mind. He was afraid to climb a ladder to the roof unless I held it for him, and he told me he'd take no responsibility for damage he might cause the rain gutter. He made only 2 inspections, not the 3 I'd been told to inspect.

-Time efficient for earthquake repairs - having separate building for earthquake repairs was considerate!!

-Very good.

-Shaky

-Typically bureaucratic (CGS) Chronic Government Syndrome

-I think perhaps the inspectors are overbooked because he was in a hurry and a bit impatient to explain things to me twice. I have never done construction and this was like a foreign language to me.

-It was the smoothest part of our reconstruction. I gained confidence in our progress. Our inspector read between the lines, understood our intents. Was patient. Was firm.

-Very good, however some inspectors are not up to date on energy conservation design needs.

-No complaint.

-As long as the same inspector was used, requirements, adjustments and info flowed smoothly. Only when a new inspector came - for final inspection - was there a problem. New inspector was not informed about what was needed for quake repair.

-Red tape.

-He didn't know his job. Was wasting a lot of time, both mine and contractors.

-My electrician did a poor job of connecting the power to house. Used wrong connectors. P.G. & E. had to come out to redo inspection. County did not catch.

-EQ crew inspectors better than County's.

-the inspectors were sometimes arrogant and intrusive and they were not in any kind of uniform to let us know they really worked for the county - long hair, dark glasses, cowboy hats. Act professional! Sometimes didn't show up.

-Ridiculous!! Inefficient. I couldn't get a final and my insurance money would not be released because the carpet was not in. Everything else was done. This is bullshit. I had to borrow money because my carpet was on backorder for 4 weeks. I

General impression of the building inspection process (Continued)

should have been able to get a final after showing my carpet receipt for the order.

- Inspectors (2) seem very knowledgeable. Always helpful.

- Radios are a big help.

- Disgrace to the residents of the county. Raises costs also to get bids from contractors. Contractor felt intimidated.

- Very costly in time & money however I don't know of a better system.

- We had excellent help from our inspectors and appreciate their help during a trying time.

- Seems adequate.

- Capricious, arbitrary, whimsical

- They don't tell you exactly when they are coming. Those who can do, those who can't inspect.

- Much better than I'd been led to believe; people were helpful in general.

- OK (listed 5 times)

- OK - I filed early with clear plans.

- Fair

- I was very impressed with all 3 inspectors who came to my project. Each seemed genuinely interested and proud on their job and were of immense help. Courteous, knowledgeable and seemed concerned that I get all the assistance from them that they could offer. I complied with their requests.

- The building inspector, was very helpful & assuring so that the chimney was rebuilt strongly and functional. He should be commended.

- Poor - I will not get a building permit again. It is better to do the repair correct with a contractor & skip the permit.

- What a JOKE!

- Very good, courteous

- seemed to be fair & expeditious

- sloppy

- unsure at this time

- they aren't responsible for their inspections (if something goes wrong) so they don't do a very thorough job.

- professional

- at first very slow, but several weeks after the quake things speeded up.

- fair (listed 3 times)

- the people should realize they are performing a "service" and address their "customers" in that regard!

- inspectors are very competent

- fair in field (depending of course greatly on individual).

Fair to less fair at intake counter depending on individual competence and courtesy.

- fair to middling

General impression of the building inspection process (Continued)

-there is no trust, even when I am doing excellent work (the inspector says so). This creates delays and inefficiency.

-Run well, a bit subjective but acceptable.

-Good (listed 4 times)

-Good experience. However, this was for a minor project and relatively easy process.

-Had heard some horror stories, however staff was knowledgeable, informative, very helpful. They went out of their way to expedite the process.

-It cost too much.

-Very professional.

-Excellent.

-the inspection process is probably the best run, professional and helpful part of the process

-Seem to be unknowledgeable about building techniques.

-no problem.

-very good.

-acceptable.

-Fairly cursory

-most positive!

-One inspection completely forgotten by inspector. Also, they refuse to set a time, only that they would come by that day. The emergency people don't seem to know what they are doing, unlike the regular building inspectors- who are very good.

-Poorly done. Sometimes the inspections were not even done - a quick walk through.

-the inspections seemed fair and accurate.

-Earthquake repair section permit is much quicker and more efficient than the standard department permit process.

-OK. We had a very simple 2 inspection project and it went OK.

-We had a very good experience with them in '90, but a terrible one before that.

-Very fair, very knowledgeable.

-Not bad.

Question 60. Please list any specific improvements in the building inspection process: (people seem to have also used this category for any additional comments)

-It would be nice if they could give you at least a morning or afternoon span so you don't have to wait all day.

-Fred, I applaud your much needed efforts!!

-Follow specific guidelines that are published and provided to the builders. No more subjective decision-making.

-Organize signature breakout and train the inspectors. We had sigs on three separate sheets and it was mayhem. Give them

Specific improvements in the building inspection process (Continued)

more lines to work with, make it a separate sheet so it's not necessary to make notes in the margins.

-The process set up for earthquake repair projects worked very well. It indicated good thinking on the part of the planning and inspection dept. May the balance of the department work as well.

-I think 1 inspector to follow through would be ideal. We had 2. Plus one person would come over and asked for additional changes. For appointments, inspectors gave only date, not time.

-Less departments involved, more direct inspector responsibility one on one.

-It seems better!

-It's very inconvenient not knowing WHEN during the day the inspection will be until that very morning. If at least a two-hour window could be provided, and/or if that time could be found out 24 hours in advance (as least!) it would help a lot! Employers are only so understanding on time off for building inspections!

-Do away with answering machines - let us talk to real people.

-I think for the effort of filling out your form, the courtesy of a reply envelope would have been appreciated

-thank you Fred for help in getting the permit

-we will mail a list at a later date

-Thanks Fred for asking. It's hard to wait weeks sometimes to reach someone by phone! Also, think about getting feedback "from the horses mouth"! Evaluation of staff by public included in all stages of process (perhaps confidential?)

-Allow photo documentary inspection or supplements. Publish a list of ALL the inspected elements & the degree of completion desired of each prior to calling for the respective inspection. Have the inspector meet me when I pick up my permit & go over the above.

-From my point of view, if I could get a time of day as well as date of inspection

-I had initial contact with a new person. He didn't seem to understand the processes but he did ask for help. The person he asked was knowledgeable. This survey should have been sent no later than 1 month after final inspection. It was hard to recall some of the information in reference to the building inspection part.

-Other than medical costs, there is no place in society where costs have gone up faster.

-None.

-Have inspectors locate addresses on the map for themselves. Mine got lost twice.

Specific improvements to the building inspection process
(Continued)

-Check existing home/cabin to alleviate OVERBUILDING. Some cabins need less foundation than others. I am overbuilding because of earthquake personnel.

-(Inspector) Would make appointment and show up the next day.

-My process was easy but in general my friend experienced a complicated, unfeeling process.

-I think a xeroxed, printed explanation of the necessary stages of inspection is not too much to ask for. To a certain extent, I was treated like I knew all the information beforehand and I didn't. Since I was given a general time of day like - "maybe morning, maybe afternoon" (for the inspection) it was awkward to work with. The one time the inspector had a disagreement it was handled with me being the middle man between the inspector and my workers. It was a bit confusing but the inspector was very nice about the whole thing and the changes made.

-Again, I feel I am in no position to make recommendations. Basically, it would be desirable to have timely, courteous and concerned service from counter people and inspectors.

-Reduce costs of inspections and permits and if an inspection is requested, do not penalize for finding things wrong during the inspection.

-Waive permits for small things on properties that do not change size of structure.

-It won't change county process. It's been the same for years.

117d5

APPLICANT'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Whereas, the people of the County of Santa Cruz adopted by vote in 1978, a comprehensive growth management and environmental protection system; and,

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors has implemented such a growth management system through a variety of ordinances, regulations, and policies; and,

Whereas, the concepts of growth management and environmental protection continue to be critically important for and broadly supported by our community; and,

Whereas, it is equally important that the permit processing system which, in part, implements growth management and environmental protection policies, be as broadly supported as the policies themselves; and,

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors has undertaken an aggressive program of reforming the permit processing system of the Santa Cruz County Planning Department; and,

Whereas, the permit processing reform effort has resulted in measurable improvements in the system; and,

Whereas, more progress needs to be made concerning permit processing reform, and the Board of Supervisors is taking actions to achieve such progress; and,

Whereas, an essential element of a meaningful permit processing reform effort is to identify and quantify the rights and obligations of both the County and applicants for permits; and,

Whereas, the existing Santa Cruz County Code and implementing regulations set forth the rights of the County and the obligations of the applicant; and,

Whereas, it is in the best interests of the people of the County of Santa Cruz to now set forth the rights of an applicant for a building permit in the County of Santa Cruz in a manner which will have the effect of upholding all of the policies of growth management and environmental protection, while, at the same time, establishing a reliable set of applicant's rights which will guide the Planning Department in processing permit applications.

~ NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz that the following issues are the policy of the County of Santa Cruz and are known commonly as the "Applicant's Bill of Rights":

1. An applicant has the right to be provided with complete information concerning the process which will be followed regarding the application, including specific steps in the process and estimated time frames for each step;
2. An applicant has the right to receive at the earliest possible time, all of the elements required by the County of Santa Cruz which would constitute a complete application;
3. An applicant has the right to be provided with clear and specific criteria which will be used by the County of Santa Cruz in making decisions pertaining to the application;

4. An applicant has the right to be provided with information concerning any and all appeals processes available concerning decisions made by the County of Santa Cruz which relate to the application;

5. An applicant has the right to request and be provided with a "single point of contact" for processing the application;

6. An applicant has the right to be provided, at the earliest possible time, with notice regarding any delays in processing the application beyond the time frames established by the County of Santa Cruz for processing the permit.

CONFIDENTIAL APPLICANT SURVEY FINDINGS & THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ON-GOING PERMIT PROCESSING REFORMS

This section of the CAS report is intended to determine whether or not the Zucker System recommendations are sufficient when implemented to bring about the necessary changes which appear to be necessary from this report to achieve full and meaningful permit processing reform.

Recommendations 3 and 4 of the Zucker Systems Report (ZSR) call for "managers to review survey results" and to "develop consensus on Department goals." The survey referred to in the Zucker Systems Report is an internal survey, not an applicant survey. Therefore, for the purposes of evaluation and usefulness in measuring applicant satisfaction, the Zucker Systems Report provides no assistance.

Recommendation 9 (ZSR) calls for the "designation of one person for policy clarification." This is the closest reference to the notion contained in the CAS that a "single point of contact" is important to meaningful permit processing reform. This element of the ZSR has been implemented and the Zoning Administrator has been so designated as the one person "for policy clarification." However, this does not establish a system whereby every applicant is provided with a "single point of contact" concerning their application.

Recommendation 10 (ZSR) calls for the "preparation of an operations manual" for the Planning Department. The May 1991 monthly report to the Board of Supervisors indicates that this recommendation is being implemented, and that the "draft operations manual" is under second review." This may well be a forum and document for inclusion of a number of policy and procedural issues which result from the CAS, including:

1. A procedure for providing complete information to applicants at the outset of the permit processing system;
2. A procedure for assuring that "complete applications" are accepted for permit processing.
3. A clear set of criteria for evaluating and deciding upon applications.
4. The development of a "road map" for applicants, including time estimates for each step in the permit process.
5. The formalizing of an appeals process for decisions made during the processing of applications.
6. A procedure for providing, as much as is possible to do so, a system for advance notice to applicants of delays in processing of applications.
7. A clear statement of the building inspection process.

Recommendations 19 - 39 (ZSR) address the issues associated with "Reception & In-Take." This would appear to be the area where a specific policy and procedure should be developed concerning a "single point of contact" for the applicant.

Recommendation 35 (ZSR) states: "Monitor applications for completeness".

Recommendation 36 (ZSR) states: "Don't accept incomplete applications." These two recommendations are consistent with the findings of the CAS. The question here is that the monthly report indicates that these two ZSR recommendations have been implemented. This may be the case as far as the internal workings of the Planning Department are concerned, however, it appears from the results of the CAS that more specific actions need to be taken to provide the applicant with a guide for preparation of a complete application.

Recommendation 74 (ZSR) calls for "all telephone calls returned by end of day." This recommendation is "on-going" according to the May report, and the Assistant County Administrative Officer/Planning Director has noted that "Managers are monitoring phone call volume and returns. Phone system is being reviewed for improvements." This is an area where the CAS indicates that improvement needs to take place.

Recommendations 76 and 77 (ZSR) call for acceptance of "only those applications that can be processed on timely basis" and "Monitoring the system and adjust fees/staff as needed." This section of the ZSR speaks to the backlog of permit applications. Certainly one of the measures of whether or not applications can be processed on a "timely basis" is if there are, in fact, time frame estimates which are associated with each step in the permit process. The CAS indicates that either such time frame estimates do not exist or they are not being made known to permit applicants on a regular basis. Regarding the adjusting of "staff as needed", this, again, may be an area where it is appropriate to develop the concept of a "single point of contact" for applicants to work with during permit processing.

Recommendation 97 (ZSR): "Alert applicants that additional studies may be needed." The May 1991 Monthly Report indicates that this recommendation is completed. The issue as it relates to the CAS is when the applicant is alerted to the need for such additional studies. A policy and procedure which would have the effect of providing the earliest possible "alert" to the applicant is needed.

Recommendations 100 and 101: "Set targets: 5 days for building permits" and "Review hazards assessments and soils/geologic report process for improvement. Set targets: 2 weeks for Hazards Assessment and 3 weeks for soil/geologic reports." Both of these recommendations are indicated as having been completed, and a marginal notation indicates "Hazards Assessment and report review times have been cut by 50% to 4 and 6 weeks. Further improvements require additional study and funds." Specific times should be developed and then implemented for these and other steps in the permit process.

While the Zucker Systems Report touches on a variety of the issues raised by the Confidential Applicant Survey, and while the Zucker Systems Report contains a number of measures which are not mentioned in this report which are having a very positive impact on the permit processing system, it appears as if additional actions by the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office, and Planning Department will be necessary in order to achieve meaningful permit processing reform.

